

Amateur Photographer



FIRST LOOK

Sony Alpha 7R III
Resolution meets speed in
Sony's latest mirrorless marvel

Passionate about photography since 1884

Whatever the weather

How **cold** and **wet days** can
still deliver stunning shots

Mirrorless top buys

What's the best
camera for **your**
shooting style
and budget?

The return of Polaroid

The all-new **OneStep 2**
– is it an instant classic?



Last chance to see...

Tim Flach focuses on
endangered species

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A week in photography



One of the biggest preconceptions about photography is that we all welcome blue-sky weather. In fact, hard sunlight can be a pain, and moodier, more unpredictable weather is often more suited to dramatic shots (one upside of the great British climate). So for this issue we asked noted documentary photographer and teacher, Tony Worobiec, to

share his secrets for getting shots in less-than-perfect weather – it's anything but a washout, as you'll see on page 14. Other big highlights include a first look at the Sony Alpha 7R III and a round-up of the best mirrorless cameras for a wide range of needs and budgets. I'm also transfixed by Tim Flach's new portraits of endangered species, and sure you will love them too – turn to page 24 now.

Nigel Atherton, Editor

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ONLINE PICTURE OF THE WEEK



© STUART SLY

Burnham-On-Sea lighthouse

by Stuart Sly

Fujifilm XPRO-2, Fujinon XF10-24mm f/4, 1/800sec at f/20, ISO 200

This tranquil coastal image was uploaded to our Twitter page using the hashtag #appicoftheweek. It was taken by photographer Stuart Sly in Burnham-On-Sea in Somerset. He tells us, 'This image was shot handheld with the tide out. This left a number of interesting options to use for the foreground,

and the high scattered cloud made the perfect shooting conditions. I shoot in raw and film simulation bracketing as this offers me amazing options on the Fuji. ACROS film simulation worked well here as I wanted the amazing deep contrasts it provides for the foreground.'

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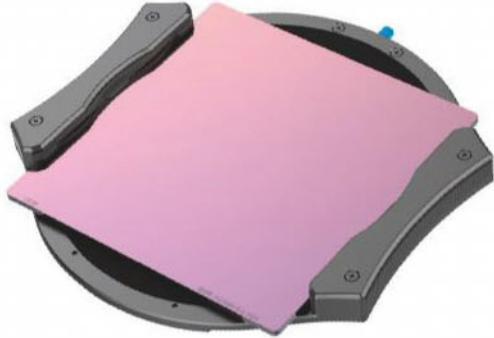
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Via our online communities Post your pictures into our Flickr group, Facebook page, Twitter feed, or the gallery on our website. See details above.

Transparencies/prints Well-packed prints or slides (without glass mounts) should be sent by Special Delivery, with a return SAE, to the address on page 53.

NEWS ROUND-UP

The week in brief, edited by Amy Davies and Hollie Latham Hucke



Irix debuts Edge 100 filter system

A new filter system designed to be used with wideangle lenses, particularly the Irix 15mm f/2.4, has been announced. The Irix Edge 100 system consists of an IFH-100 holder for 100mm filters, and a range of 100x100mm and 100x150mm filters, including graduated filters and reverse graduated filters. UK availability and prices have yet to be announced. For more details visit irixlens.com.

DxO acquires Nik Collection from Google

The Nik Collection, a range of popular photo-editing software plug-ins for Adobe Lightroom and Photoshop, has been saved by DxO. Earlier this year Google announced that it would discontinue development of the software, but the purchase means that it will live on in its current format until a new version is released next year.



Square-format printer launched

Instax has announced a new printer for creating square-format prints. The SHARE SP-3 can print from smartphones or social media via an app. The printer follows the launch of the Instax SQUARE SQ10 camera, a hybrid digital and instant camera. Availability and prices are yet to be announced. See fujifilm.eu/uk/products.



Fluid Gimbal Head from Gitzo

Gitzo's new Fluid Gimbal Head is designed to provide perfect balance when using heavy equipment. It features ergonomic knobs, an Arca Swiss-type-compatible quick-release base and Arca Swiss-type plate with rubber grips. The Gitzo GHFG1 Fluid Gimbal Head will retail for £399.95. Visit www.manfrotto.co.uk for more details.

Manfrotto reveals Befree travel tripods

Manfrotto has launched a new Befree Advanced Collection, consisting of two tripods and a ballhead. Both tripods feature new ergonomic leg-angle selectors, with one tripod featuring twist-locks (called the Befree Advanced M-Lock), and the other featuring lever-locks (called the Befree Advanced QPL Travel). Prices start from £174.95. Visit www.manfrotto.co.uk.



BIG picture

The 'hopeful eyes' have it in this poignant award-winning image

QUOC Nguyen Linh Vinh, a 20-year-old professional photographer from Vietnam, has been awarded first place in the 2017 Environmental Photographer of the Year (EPOTY) competition. Vinh's image 'The hopeful eyes of the girl making a living by rubbish' was taken in the waste dump of Kon



Tum in Vietnam. Vinh recalls, 'The child was happy, looking at the dark clouds and chatting to her mother. This was so touching. She should have been enjoying her childhood.'

Launched in 2007 by The Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management (CIWEM), EPOTY showcases the best environmental photography from around the world, by amateur and professional photographers alike.

Words & numbers

To take photographs is to hold one's breath when all faculties converge in the face of fleeing reality. It is at that moment that mastering an image becomes a great physical and intellectual joy

Henri Cartier-Bresson
French photographer (1908-2004)

SOURCE: GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS

79.37

Number of metres of the longest photographic negative, achieved by Esteban Pastorino Diaz, with the help of Didi Dache



Lightweight and compact, all three f/1.2 PRO lenses are said to have super-fast autofocus



Sigma unveils 16mm f/1.4 lens for mirrorless

A NEW Sigma prime lens for Sony APS-C and Micro Four Thirds mirrorless cameras has been announced.

The Sigma 16mm f/1.4 DC DN | Contemporary lens features 16 elements in 13 groups, designed to minimise optical aberrations and to offer superb resolution, even at the widest aperture.

The optical design and stepping motor promise smooth and quiet autofocus, while the lens mount is dust- and splash-proof thanks to a special sealing.

When used with the Sony E Mount, the lens offers an equivalent focal length of 24mm, and with Olympus or Panasonic, the focal length is 32mm.

Pricing and availability are yet to be revealed.

Olympus adds pair of PRO prime lenses

TWO NEW Olympus prime lenses, the M.Zuiko Digital ED 17mm f/1.2 PRO and the M.Zuiko Digital ED 45mm f/1.2 PRO, have been added to the existing 25mm f/1.2 PRO lens – bolstering the f/1.2 PRO series to three.

All lenses in the f/1.2 PRO range promise to produce high-quality bokeh along with outstanding resolution and super-fast, high-precision autofocus. Designed to be lightweight and compact, the lenses also boast dust-, splash- and freeze-proofing.

The 17mm f/1.2 PRO lens offers an equivalent focal length of 34mm, ideal for landscape, documentary and street photography. It uses aspherical lens elements, including newly developed Extra-low Dispersion Dual Super Aspherical (ED-DSA) lenses. These are lightweight and help to minimise various

aberrations that are common in wideangle lenses, such as distortion and colour bleeding, as well as chromatic aberration.

Offering an equivalent focal length of 90mm, the 45mm f/1.2 PRO lens is ideal for portraits. The design of the back focus and relay lens system allows for a reduction in the number of lens elements required, making for a compact, lightweight lens. Like the 17mm lens, the lens elements are also designed to compensate for a range of aberrations.

Both lenses feature the same Z Coating Nano technology found on the 25mm f/1.2 PRO lens, which helps to provide sharp, clear images free from ghosting.

All three lenses in the f/1.2 PRO series feature the same design layout. The focusing ring is placed at the front of the lens, and a function button is found in the same place on all three. You can switch quickly between manual and autofocus by pulling the focusing ring towards you.

The M.Zuiko Digital ED 45mm f/1.2 PRO will be available from December, with a retail price of £1,199. The M.Zuiko Digital ED 17mm f/1.2 PRO will be available from March 2018, priced £1,299.



The new optics have the same design



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The Tamron 100-400mm f/4.5-6.3 lens will be the lightest in its class

Tamron launches zoom for full-frame DSLRs

TAMRON has announced a new ultra-telephoto lens for full-frame Canon and Nikon DSLRs.

The Tamron 100-400mm f/4.5-6.3 Di VC USD includes three Low Dispersion (LD) lens elements, designed to reduce aberration. Both Tamron's Extended Bandwidth & Angular-Dependency (eBAND) coating and Broad-Band Anti Reflection (BBAR) coating are included as part of the lens design, promising to reduce reflections, ghosting and flare, as well as increase light transmission.

Weighing in at just 1,115g and measuring 196.5mm (7.7in), the optic is the lightest in its class, with magnesium alloy in key areas of the lens barrel to improve strength as well as to keep the weight down.

The lens is also said to deliver fast and precise autofocus, while the Vibration Compensation (VC) gives a 4-stop benefit thanks to the high-speed Dual Micro-Processing Unit (MPU) control system found in all of the latest Tamron models.

For close-up work, the lens has a maximum magnification ratio of

1:3.6, plus a minimum focusing distance of 1.5m (59in).

Additionally, the Tamron 100-400mm f/4.5-6.3 lens is compatible with Tamron's 1.4x tele converter as well as the Tamron TAP-in Console that enables lens customisation. An Arca Swiss-compatible tripod mount is also available as an optional accessory.

Both the Canon and Nikon mount models will be launched simultaneously on 16 November. At the time of writing, UK pricing had not been announced, but there is a US price of \$800.

New Pentax Star-series lenses

RICOH has announced the development of two new lenses for its Pentax Star series, specifically designed to work with high-megapixel cameras.

The HD Pentax-DA* 11-18mm f/2.8 is for APS-C cameras, while the HD Pentax-D FA* 50mm f/1.4 SDM AW is for full-frame models.

The lenses represent the new generation of Star lenses, which have been around since Pentax's film days. Older Star lenses were designed to produce optimum image quality, with large apertures for maximum light transmission. The new generation lenses come with dust-proofing and a weather-resistant construction.

A newly developed ring-shaped Supersonic Direct-Drive Motor (SDM) for fast and quiet AF operation will be a feature of the 50mm lens, but full specifications, along with pricing details, are yet to be announced.

The 50mm f/1.4 lens is likely to be available in spring of next year, while the 11-18mm f/2.8 lens is due for a summer release.



Ricoh plans a new generation of Pentax's original Star lenses

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Sony Alpha 7R III

Sony's new mirrorless powerhouse promises to be its most versatile professional-level camera yet.

Andy Westlake takes a first look

At a glance

£3,200 body only

- 42.4MP full-frame BSI CMOS sensor
- 10fps continuous shooting
- Hybrid AF with 399 phase-detection points
- ISO 100-32,000, ISO 50-102,400 expanded
- 5.5-stop 5-axis in-body image stabilisation
- 4K video recording

IT'S FOUR years since Sony unveiled the world's first full-frame mirrorless cameras in the shape of the 24MP Alpha 7 and 36MP Alpha 7R. A year and a half later we saw the updated Alpha 7R II, with a groundbreaking 42MP sensor, built-in 5-axis image stabilisation and a much-improved body design. Now it's time for round three, in the form of the Alpha 7R III. Sony has decided to stick to what it knows best and kept to a familiar template, with a compact, SLR-styled body and central EVF. But the new model has taken the Alpha 7R II design and added many of the best features it debuted on the excellent Alpha 9 earlier this year, resulting in a very compelling camera that should give the Nikon D850 a serious run for its money.

Features

The Alpha 7R III uses essentially the same 42.4MP full-frame sensor as that found in the Alpha 7R II, but almost everything else has been improved and updated. With the latest Bionx X processor and front-end LSI, the new camera has a standard sensitivity range of ISO 100-32,000 that's expandable to ISO 50-102,400. Sony claims it now offers fully 15 stops of dynamic range at ISO 100, which can be recorded into its 14-bit raw files even during continuous shooting.

Speaking of which, the Alpha 7R III is now substantially faster, being capable of shooting at 10 rather than 5 frames per second. It also has a considerably larger buffer, which means it can shoot 28 uncompressed raw files in a single burst, or 77 compressed raw or JPEG files. A new shutter unit promises low vibration, and is rated for 500,000 cycles, while a silent electronic shutter is also available.

Autofocus uses a hybrid system covering approximately 68% of the frame, with 399 phase-detection and 425 contrast-detection points. Sony has incorporated

Power

The uprated NP-FZ100 battery is borrowed from the Alpha 9. It's specified for 650 shots using the LCD, or 530 with the EVF, according to CIPA standard testing.

Accessories

The Alpha 7R III is compatible with the same VG-C3EM vertical grip as that used on the Alpha 9.

Stabilisation

Improved 5-axis in-body image stabilisation promises 5.5 stops of shake correction, which Sony claims is the most effective yet in a full-frame camera.



Twin card slots

The Alpha 7R III now has two SD card slots, one of which is of the faster UHS-II type. Unlike the Alpha 9, the 7R III can automatically switch between cards when one fills up.



The Alpha 7R III maintains the compact size of its predecessors



The newly added touchscreen can be used to set the autofocus point

the autofocus algorithms from the Alpha 9, promising a 'quantum leap' in AF performance over the Alpha 7R II, with 2x faster focusing speed, and improved focus tracking and Eye-AF performance.

Like its predecessor, the Alpha 7R III is capable of recording 4K video at 30fps, using either the full width of the sensor or a Super-35 crop. Full HD recording is also available at up to 120fps, while microphone and headphone sockets are built in for better-quality sound recording. One interesting addition is 4K HDR using Hybrid Log Gamma, allowing high-dynamic-range playback on compatible TVs with no need for any additional processing.

Sony has added some useful new features, too. It's now possible to protect images in-camera during playback, or assign them star ratings that should be recognised by Adobe Lightroom and Bridge. There are also dual USB ports – one Micro-USB and the other USB-C – so you can power the camera through one while using a cable release with the other.

Body and design

Measuring 126.9x95.7x73.7mm and weighing 657g, the Alpha 7R III is about the same size as its predecessor. It also has essentially the same top-plate control layout, but on the back it resembles the Alpha 9. So in a hugely

welcome move, it gains an AF-on button and AF-area selection joystick (although disappointingly the focus area is still 'highlighted' in a near-invisible mid-grey). It also has a much better-positioned movie button and a larger, easier-to-use rear dial than before.

Like the Alpha 9, the Alpha 7R III employs a large, high-resolution 3.69-million-dot EVF, which provides a bright, detailed view. The LCD has been upgraded to 1.44-million dots with WhiteMagic technology for improved brightness, and is touch-sensitive for setting the focus point. Sadly, though, Sony has insisted on sticking with its relatively inflexible tilt-only approach. I'd have preferred to see a fully articulated design, like those found on other makers' top-end mirrorless cameras.

First impressions

With the Alpha 7R III, Sony appears to have done a really good job of developing the Alpha 7R II design. It's added a sensible set of features from the Alpha 9, with the larger battery and revised control layout being especially welcome. Having had a little time hands-on with the camera, my first impression is that it feels snappier and more responsive, with autofocus in particular being considerably quicker. I'm really looking forward to getting my hands on one for a full review.

Pixel Shift Multi Shooting

NEW for Sony is a Pixel Shift Multi Shooting mode that uses the IS system to take four exposures of the same scene, while shifting the sensor precisely one pixel between each. It records four ARW raw files, which can be combined on a computer using Sony's new Imaging Edge software to deliver a composite file with full-colour sampling at each pixel. This can then be developed to give an image with higher detail, more accurate colours and improved tonality. One disadvantage is that the camera has to wait a second between frames, which is likely to cause problems in scenes where anything is moving. But similar systems give great results on Pentax and Olympus cameras, so it'll be interesting to see what the Alpha 7R III can achieve.

Versatile Sony full-frame zoom

SONY has announced the FE 24-105mm F4 G OSS, a weather-sealed standard zoom that it claims is the lightest in its class. Weighing 663g, the new lens promises high image quality due to the inclusion of four aspherical lens elements, two of which are high precision advanced aspherical (AA) lenses.

Three Extra-low Dispersion (ED) glass elements are also used to help minimise chromatic aberration. Its Nano AR coating minimises flare, while a circular aperture gives attractive bokeh. Autofocus is driven by Sony's Direct Drive SSM system, and in common with other G-series lenses, Sony has included a focus-hold button on the side of the barrel. Optical image stabilisation is also built in, promising sharper handheld shots.

As a member of Sony's G line, the 24-105mm



Sony has included focus and stabilisation mode switches

lens is designed to deliver excellent sharpness while also producing beautifully rendered 'bokeh' or background blur. This should make it a versatile option for landscapes, portraits or weddings. The new Sony lens is due to go on sale this month, priced around £1,200.



This was shot with the new FE 24-105mm at 105mm and f/4

Sony FE 400mm f/2.8 GM in development

IN SURELY one of the least surprising photo-gear announcements of recent times, Sony has revealed that it is also working on a 400mm f/2.8 telephoto prime lens designed to be used with the high-speed Alpha 9 full-frame mirrorless camera. Details are scarce, with Sony merely saying that the new optic will be part of the firm's top-end G Master lens line-up. Somewhat disappointingly, the 400mm f/2.8 is due to appear in summer 2018 – a full year after the appearance of the Alpha 9 – which will leave sports shooters working with adapted third-party optics for some months yet.



Viewpoint

Mike Smith

What is art? Mike Smith adds his thoughts to this eternal question by referring to an infamous century-old work

I was recently reading Alain Stephen's thought-provoking *Why We Think the Things We Think: Philosophy in a Nutshell* (2017) which posed the endlessly provocative question 'What is art?' Well, because it's beautiful and pleasing is a common starting point, although the question then becomes – what is beautiful? However Eugène Véron went further and said that art is the expression of human ideas and emotions. As a photographer that really struck a chord with me, although it left a slight taste in the mouth because there are clearly some highly regarded photographs that I don't like (and to get a sense of the breadth of the photographic canon, just look back over some of Roger Hicks's 'Final Analysis' columns).

Leo Tolstoy developed this argument further by suggesting that good art is able to successfully communicate ideas or emotions, whilst bad art isn't. I like that – as an argument it has a few holes in it, not least the proposition of 'I know what I like' – but in fact I like it because I can relate to it as a photographer, being both a consumer and creator of art. I can look at a photo and decide whether I like it, but I can also try to understand the idea, message or emotion that is being communicated to me and whether it is successful at doing that. And I like Roger's columns because they not only make me think about what is being communicated, but remind me that Roger and I only partially see the same things. There is much we see that does not overlap.

Future generations

And perhaps that is what is fascinating about photography as art. The image at best presents a singularity, at worst is entirely deceptive and is usually ambiguous. And those ideas are not only constrained by the background and social mores of the photographer, but also the viewer. Which explains why photos can be seen as bad art when they are first captured, but may well be viewed as good art by later generations.

Alain Stephen's article finishes by pointing the reader to Duchamp's 'Fountain', a piece of art that I hadn't, until that point, come across. This was submitted by Marcel Duchamp to the



If Marcel Duchamp and Alfred Stieglitz can do it... is Mike's image as artistically valid?

'I can look at a photo and decide whether I like it, but I can also try to understand the idea'

Society of Independent Artists 1917 exhibition in New York (go and look at the Wikipedia page before reading on).

Yes, that really is a urinal – Duchamp supposedly purchased this from his local B&Q (or Manhattan equivalent) and submitted it in protest (and as a social commentary, aka waste products!) on art at the time. Perhaps not surprisingly, the Society didn't display it and its final resting place is unknown. It is actually the photograph of 'Fountain' which people know the artwork by, although what fascinated me was that it was taken by Alfred Stieglitz (by then well-established) at his gallery 291. The photograph has replaced the artwork and, along the way, metamorphosed the idea with its own embellishments and connotations. Viewing this image above, what does this say to you about art and photography?

Mike Smith is a London-based wedding and portrait photographer. Visit www.focali.co.uk

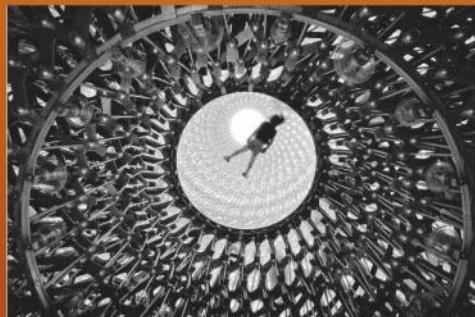
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On sale Tuesday 14 November



Top 100

Take it from us - AP's pick of the best cameras and lenses



The art of science

The winning images in The Institute of Engineering and Technology's contest

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LETTER OF THE WEEK



After years of entering contests, Alan Rigley struck gold with this image

Seen and herd

I have been a hobbyist photographer for a number of years and am always submitting photos to various competitions but never getting anywhere. About two months ago I noticed a competition from a chain of opticians for a calendar in aid of the Alzheimer's Society. I entered a photograph of two young cows standing under a tree and it was picked as one of the 12 finalists. The image is now in the Society's 2018 calendar (illustrating March). I am so happy and thrilled about winning, and so my advice to all amateurs out there is – do not give up; try, try and try again and good luck! **Alan Rigley, Nottingham**

Well done, Alan, a lovely pastoral image and you're right – when it comes to competitions, keep trying and improving and you never know what might happen – Geoff Harris, deputy editor

Win! SAMSUNG

The EVO + microSD Card has added memory capacity and multi-device functionality. This UHS-I Speed Class 1 (U1) and Class 10 compatible card is perfect for capturing photos and video recording. www.samsung.com



A present from the past

My 18-year-old nephew invited me to check out his 'digital' camera. Sifting through some of his first-rate A4 colour street shots I was amazed to see he was using a humble Kodak Retinette 1A, given to him as a gift. He'd had his HP5 negatives professionally scanned. It's since been augmented by a more 'up to date' Miranda Sensomat with

waist-level finder that also turns out beautifully sharp negatives. Scanning film shot on classic cameras is a wonderful way to combine the past and the present. **Kevin Wilson, Tyne and Wear**

Security matters

I read with interest Michael Topham's story about the ill-fated wedding photographer whose gear was stolen during the big day

(Viewpoint 14 October). I also occasionally photograph weddings and it reminded me – once again – not to leave my bag lying around out of sight. But it also made me realise the real value of anything photographic – the images themselves. Presumably a professional wedding photographer can claim for theft on his insurance policy but the images, alas, can never be retrieved. The images are the really valuable items here, particularly for the couple, so all serious photographers should be scrupulous about keeping memory cards on their person when they are not being used, as we would with debit and credit cards. A full memory card of wedding images is, literally, irreplaceable.

Susie Edwards

AP appeal

I am researching the careers of two photographers who were prominent in the 1920s to 1950s, and I suspect that *Amateur Photographer* may well have published articles by or about them. I would therefore like to know if there is an index to AP that covers this time period and, if so, where it may be accessed? The photographers are Bertram Park and his wife Yvonne Gregory who, along with Marcus Adams had successful studios in Dover Street, London. It would also be helpful if you can let me know if a complete set of AP is available anywhere?

Philip Toms, via email

Very interesting Philip – we will check our archive. Below is one of Park's famous images – Geoff Harris, deputy editor



Bertram Park's photograph of King George VI

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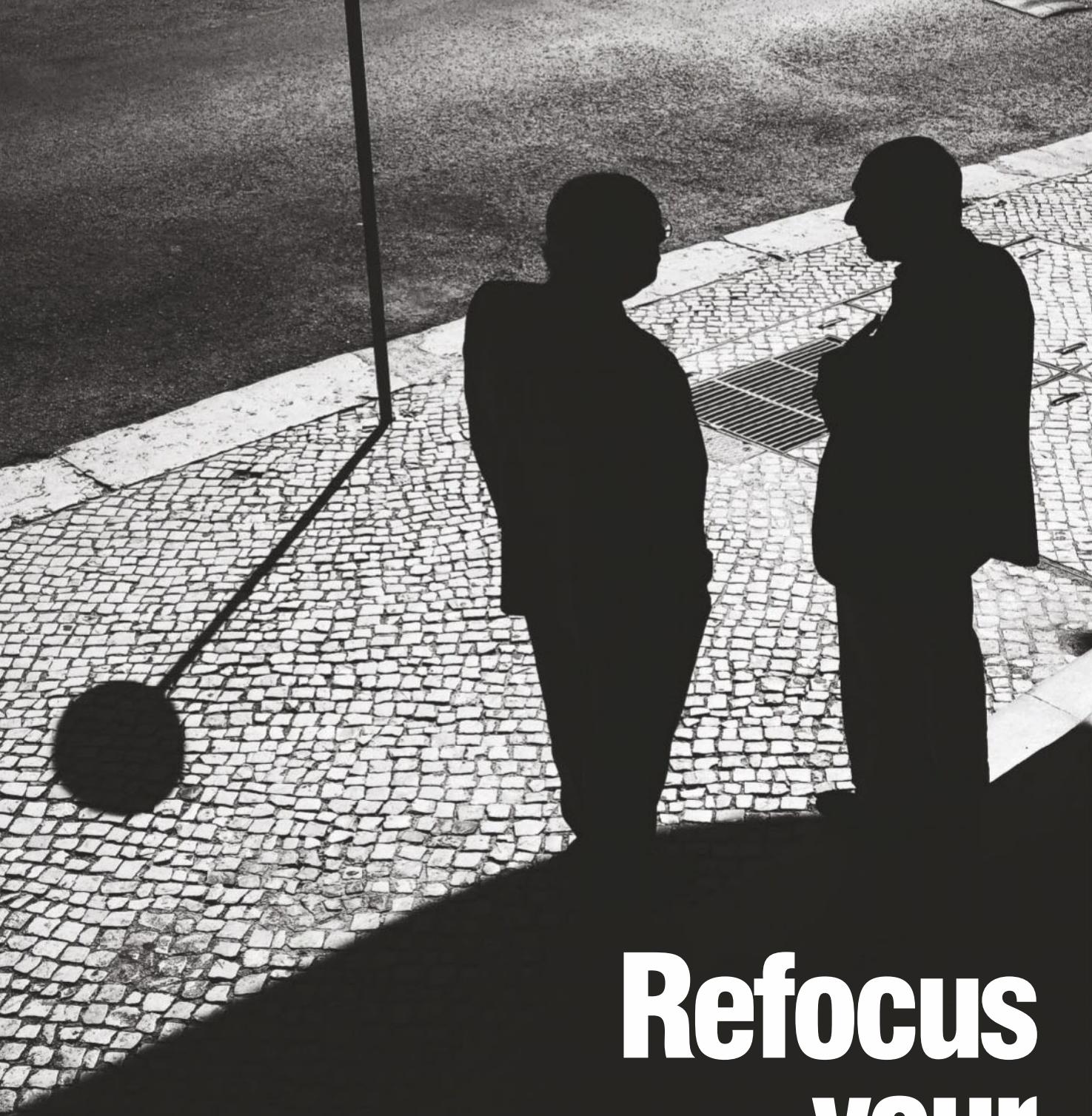


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**STREET
PHOTOGRAPHY**

Whatever the weather

The weather defines the mood of any landscape. **Tony Worobiec** reveals how to make the most of whatever it throws at you



Waves off a jetty at Sidmouth.
When you notice the wind is up,
why not head to the coast?

KIT LIST



► Long telephoto lens

My 100-400mm zoom is a revelation as it allows me to enter into the 'spirit' of the landscape. From an aesthetic standpoint, I enjoy the compression effect these lenses give.



► Tripod

A solid tripod is crucial. There will be many times when you need to use a very small aperture, which, of course, requires a slow shutter speed.



► Think Tank camera bag

Aside from the excellent construction, I also value its rain cover. It keeps the bag dry and can also be used as a groundsheet should you want to place your bag on a wet surface.



Tony Worobiec

Tony Worobiec FRPS has had 16 books published, the most recent of which is *Photographing Landscape Whatever The Weather* (RHE Media Ltd, ISBN 978-19102-2642-1). He has won awards for photography in the UK and internationally, and has had his work exhibited in numerous prestigious venues.

Weather is the defining quality of any landscape, and the wilder it is the more interesting your photographs will appear. It governs the two most important features of landscape – notably, lighting and mood. As we slip into winter, the weather certainly can prove more challenging, and the temptation can be for some to pack their cameras away. The purpose of this feature is to urge you not to give in and to embrace what the forthcoming months have to offer. Whether the skies are grey, it's throwing it down with rain, or you are enveloped in fog, instead of viewing this as a problem, count your good fortune and embrace these exciting possibilities.

Grey skies

When the skies appear featureless and overcast, it is tempting not to venture out, but the important point to remember is that you cannot change the weather, but you can change your location. Once you understand this simple principle, no day will ever be wasted. While the idea of a grey sky conjures up a certain negativity, it is important to appreciate that it also evokes a specific mood that can work well in certain landscape situations. For example, abandoned places or areas that exude pathos work far more effectively when photographed under a grey sky. The skill is to match the location with the available weather. Grey skies can be anything from flat, featureless cloud, to something more dramatic. Viewed positively, each offers fabulous opportunities



'Remember that you cannot change the weather, but you can change your location'

ALL PICTURES © TONY WOROBIEC



◀ Clean microfibre cloth

Moisture and bad weather go hand in hand, so whether you are photographing a coastal location in high winds, or a dewy forest in heavy mist, you will find droplets of water on the front element, which will need cleaning.



◀ Neutral Density filter

These come in a variety of strengths, and are useful when you want to reduce the shutter speed, particularly when shooting rain or wind.



Groynes at Sandsend in North Yorkshire. When experiencing grey skies, look for a subject that chimes with the mood

for exciting landscape photography. From a technical standpoint, shooting under grey skies is relatively easy – with a reduction of contrast, it will prove considerably easier to keep the histogram within the 0-255 tonal range.

Rain

While I am sure many of you will share my enthusiasm for grey skies, I suspect fewer will be as keen to photograph in rain. If you are discouraged, don't be, because some truly awesome images can be taken when it's wet; it just takes a bit more commitment. In common with grey skies, rain offers many varieties, each presenting unique challenges. We can experience a gentle rain through to a full-blown deluge. Obviously, when considering

the latter, it's better if both you and your camera remain dry. It is difficult to muster the enthusiasm to take pictures once you are drenched and, on a similar tack, most DSLR cameras are vulnerable to heavy rain and can sustain serious damage if they are not adequately protected. The top-plate and the back of your camera are especially vulnerable. If you are driving and it is pouring with rain, it is very easy to dismiss a potentially exciting shot. If, however, you are already wearing your waterproofs, you will be more inclined to stop.

Ice and snow

I am struggling to think of any serious landscape photographer who would not be excited by the prospect of ice and snow; a snowy

SELECTING THE SAME LOCATION

TO TRULY understand the nuances of the weather, try photographing the same location from precisely the same spot. Two photographs taken at a single location will never be the same, due to the vagaries of the weather. No landscape photograph, no matter how hard you try, can ever be repeated.

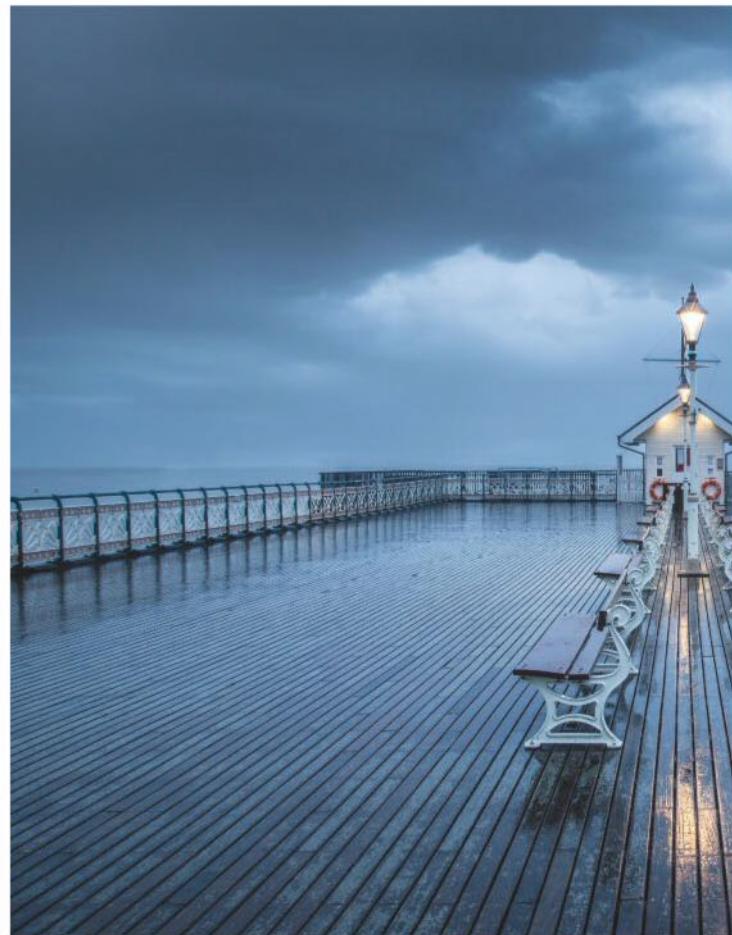
Select a location that is convenient; the essence of this exercise is spontaneity. The sky tends to be the mirror of the prevailing weather, so compose

your picture to include plenty of it. Keep the foreground relatively simple, otherwise it could deflect attention from that element you particularly want to highlight – namely, the weather.

Set the images side by side and identify the subtle differences the changing weather brings. When editing, also consider the time of day when the photograph was taken. Understand that you don't necessarily need to capture a defined weather pattern for a photograph to be interesting.



Saltburn Beach. These four images were taken over several days. It was important that I captured the receding tide at the same point within the cycle. While all four shots reveal broken cloud and the same compositional structure, the character of each image is different, reflecting the subtle differences each day brings. Grouping your images in this way gives you a better appreciation of what these differences are





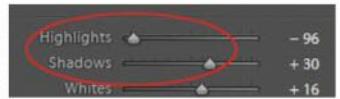
Penarth Pier in South Wales during a heavy shower. Urban locations, and piers in particular, can appear utterly transformed when photographed in rain



Trees in snow. When photographing in snow, take some time to look for striking, graphical effects

POST-PROCESSING USING LIGHTROOM OR ACR

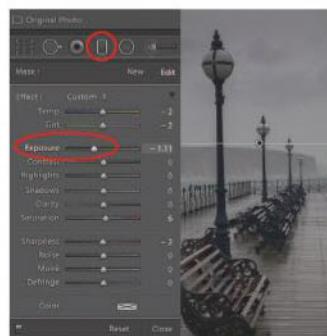
YOU DON'T need me to remind you that most photographs are better shot in raw, as this allows for greater flexibility in post-processing. When shooting in challenging weather conditions, keeping control of contrast or ensuring all the information remains within the 0–255 spectrum can be difficult, so using the camera's dedicated raw convertor or Adobe Lightroom is one way of overcoming this. You will need to pay for Lightroom, but you can download the raw convertor for free at www.adobe.com.



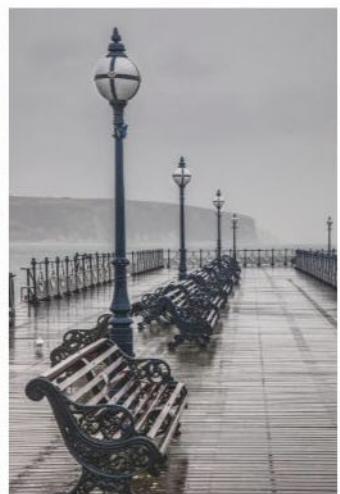
2 The sky in the image appears pale, while the foreground shadows are too dark. I reduced the highlights by dragging the Highlight slider to the left. I then cautiously pushed the Shadow slider to the right, which immediately increased shadow detail. It's easy to get carried away, so keep an eye on the histogram.



4 Possibly the most appreciated tool in Lightroom or ACR is the Clarity slider, which increases the contrast in the mid-tones. By pushing the Clarity slider to the right, the mid-tones are expanded, revealing the boardwalk's texture.



3 The sky was still too light; by using the Graduated Selection tool, I made a smooth incremental selection and was able to subtly darken it by pulling the Exposure slider slightly to the left. The great advantage of using Lightroom or ACR is that if you don't like what you see, you can return to an earlier step by clicking Previous.



5 The finished image. Often qualities we saw when we took the photograph are not apparent when we view it in the LCD or computer screen. By carefully adjusting selected tonal values in ACR, much of the initial drama that motivated you to take the photograph is revealed.



Snow has the capacity to simplify the landscape, offering a wonderfully minimalist transformation

scene retains a charm few can resist. Predicting snow is not too difficult and, to its credit, the Met Office's predictions often prove surprisingly accurate. If you are fortunate enough to be out shooting in the snow, look for simple designs. Landscape often assumes a marvellous graphical quality, particularly if the snow is moderately light. Farm tracks, ploughed fields, remnants of harvested fields – all leave distinctive marks

that offer amazing photographic potential. If, by way of contrast, you experience a much heavier snowfall, look for the opportunities for a minimalist landscape. The landscape will appear overwhelmingly white, with just the odd dark area punctuating the light. The high-key nature of the images also helps to contribute to this minimalist approach. If you have metered your landscape correctly and

checked the histogram, you will see that the tonal values are bunching to the right. With a very limited tonal range and very few visual elements, you should be able to produce images of stunning simplicity.

Mist and fog

OK, time to be realistic – there can't be many photographers who would think to place mist and fog under the umbrella of 'bad weather'. Even the most



The River Stour, Dorset. In normal conditions it is possible to see a cluster of houses to the extreme left, but here the mist has masked them

10 steps for shooting in rain

1 Choose your location carefully

Urban areas make great subjects in the rain. Surfaces such as wet tarmac reflect beautifully, especially at night.

2 Judge the direction of the rain

If it's blowing towards you, your lens's front element will soon be covered in droplets.

3 Use a UV filter

It's far better to get moisture on the filter, rather than on your expensive lens.

4 Clean your lens

Keep checking the front of your lens, and have a clean microfibre cloth available to clean off any droplets.

5 Try handheld

Don't assume you should always use a tripod. Consider shooting handheld, too.

6 Increase the ISO if necessary

The sensors on modern DSLRs are quite capable of delivering excellent results, even with the ISO set to 4000.

7 Use a long lens

I am a fan of using long lenses when capturing weather – you can then shoot from a sheltered spot.

8 Always have a lens hood attached

Another advantage of using a long lens, as their hoods tend to be very deep.

9 Experiment with shutter speeds

A slow shutter speed is great, but try using a faster one, particularly when there are figures in frame.

10 Keep your camera dry

Personally, I find purpose-made camera rain sleeves too elaborate, and prefer using a simple plastic bag or even a cheap shower cap.

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When the weather is overcast and dull, one option is to try long exposure minimalism and the Old Pier at Swanage in Dorset is a great subject, with its decaying wooden posts surrounded by empty sea. Why long exposures? Well, with seascapes, a long exposure will smooth out the texture of both water and sky, simplifying the scene further and enhancing their use as negative space in the composition.

I wanted to smooth the water to a completely glassy surface, so I selected a ProGlass 4.5 (15-stop) IRND. With some adjustment of aperture and ISO, I was able to get an exposure of 8 minutes - any longer would have smoothed the clouds too much. A 0.6ND (two-stop) medium grad added some drama to the sky and the final result had just the look I was after.

The colours are really neutral, which is remarkable for such a dense filter and there is a superb clarity and evenness of exposure across the frame. The other great feature of this filter is that its stated stop value is absolutely spot on, so calculating long exposures is no problem. It should be no surprise that these filters now have a permanent place in my kit bag.

M Bauer

Mark Bauer
markbauerphotography.com

Canon 5Ds, 24-70mm f/4L at 42mm,
ISO 200, 480 seconds at f/8.0

ProGlass 4.5 IRND (15-stop),
0.6 ND medium grad (2-stop)

(RAW file – unprocessed)



leefilters.com



The cloudscape of a passing storm provides a good contrast to the calm water in the foreground

 inexperienced landscape photographers get excited by it.

As fog tends to reduce colour saturation considerably, a much stronger emphasis is placed on the image's tonal values. Consequently, images taken in fog can often be very successfully converted to black & white. If, however, you choose to retain the colour, the hues will appear wonderfully subtle. When photographing in fog, you can explore a visual phenomenon known as tonal recession.

What this means is that distant objects appear considerably lighter than those closer to the camera; this is especially apparent when photographing a cluster of trees. The tonal interplay between the trees in the distance and those nearer the camera can prove particularly transformational. Because of the reduced visibility, images tend to be simpler and more graphic in nature.

Wind

Wind is a contradictory phenomenon insofar as it is invisible, and yet you can see

the evidence all around you. Shooting in the wind certainly has its drawbacks. For example, if you are using a tripod and aren't sufficiently sheltered, the buffeting can cause camera shake, especially when using a long telephoto lens. On a more positive note, wind also introduces drama to the landscape and is capable of transforming the ordinary into the extraordinary. From a technical standpoint, remember you do have a variety of shutter speeds to play with.

Landscape photographers often prefer to use the AV rather than the TV option as they consider controlling depth of field to be more important than shutter speed. When photographing in the wind, however, it's a good idea to make the shutter speed your priority. It could be that you want to capture some object being blown in the wind that requires a fast shutter speed. Alternatively, capturing the moving clouds might be another way of illustrating wind, which then requires using an extended shutter speed.

AP

Fog tends to reduce colour saturation considerably. Images taken in fog can often be successfully converted to black & white'

Planning and anticipating bad weather

TO GET the best out of landscape photography, you need to recognise you cannot change the weather, but you can change your location. You may have spotted a beautiful field of red poppies and decided to shoot them under a blue sky. Days pass and the conditions are never right, but when they finally are, the poppies are well past their best. A much better way is to celebrate the weather conditions each day offers. When you look out in the morning and it is pouring with rain, that's a real cause for celebration. When you arrive at a location and it is

shrouded in thick mist, ponder on your good fortune. As you familiarise yourself with a given place, ask yourself what weather conditions would be suitable.

It certainly helps to be aware of forthcoming weather. While the media can give us a good overall picture, sometimes it is not specific enough. What you need is a service that gives you an hour-by-hour forecast. There are numerous websites which are more targeted. Moreover, there are many excellent apps you can use, even as you travel. All will help you be in the right place at the right time.



Trees in mist. At home, the cloud was low and featureless, but I remembered a wonderful wood about 20 miles away, which is located on higher ground. Acting on a hunch, I guessed it would be shrouded in a gentle mist, as indeed it was. Being able to anticipate the weather certainly helps



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The saiga has been hunted for its meat and horns for centuries, but a deadly virus in 2015 and 2016 killed thousands

ALL PICTURES © TIM FLACH

Dodging flak

For his new book on endangered species, **Tim Flach** had to sidestep poachers and got stranded in Gabon. As he tells **Tracy Calder**, it was all worth it if it makes us value our precious world more





When the weather turns, polar bears make a pit in the snow and hunker down, allowing the snow to drift over them

The saiga, a nomadic antelope whose range extends from Kazakhstan to Uzbekistan, is a curious-looking creature (far left). A survivor from the ice ages, its drooping nose can warm up cold air (essential for bitter winters) while filtering out dust (for dry summers).

'The saiga looks like something out of the canteen scene in *Star Wars*,' laughs photographer Tim Flach as he recalls his brief encounter with the animal.

Tim may be laughing now but this goat-like creature proved extremely tricky to photograph.

'These animals have been decimated through hunting for their horns,' he reveals.

Only the males grow horns, which are sold in East Asia for their supposed medicinal properties. In 2015 a deadly virus hit the population and this, combined with poaching, has caused numbers to plummet. As a result, the saiga are now critically endangered – and extremely hard to find.

With the help of a contact in Moscow, Tim located a saiga herd – but it was just the beginning of his troubles.

'I visited an area near the Caspian Sea during the summer and found myself in a fly-infested location,' he recalls. 'By 9.30am the heat was so fierce that it distorted the air and my pictures were blurred.'

Not to be deterred, Tim returned during the winter months when temperatures fell to -35°C. Against all odds, this time he got his picture.

'Poachers hunt the saiga on a kind of moped, so when they hear a motor, or any kind of noise, they just run and run,' he explains. 'I photographed one saiga as he was glancing back but by the time I took another shot, he was gone'.

Eye-opening

More than two years in the making, *Endangered*, Tim's latest book, is eye-opening in every sense. Who knew that vultures play such a crucial role in disease prevention, for example?

'Vultures are nature's cleaners,' says Tim. 'They live off the dead and they clean the carcasses. Now 90% of them have disappeared and it's having different consequences in different continents.'

He explains that in India, for example, cases of rabies have increased as dogs have filled the gap left by the birds' rapid decline. Unlike vultures, their digestive

'The planes wouldn't pick us up because the pilots were scared – they left us in Gabon'

 systems cannot destroy dangerous pathogens and consequently they pass them on to humans.

Deciding which animals to feature in his book resulted in some interesting conversations.

'I asked a lot of eminent people which animals I should include but the world's panda expert is just going to say "pandas"!' he laughs.

Nevertheless, he spent six months asking leading scientists and conservationists questions about value systems and nature. One of them was Dr Jonathan Baillie, chief scientist at the National Geographic Society.

'Jonathan has been at the coalface, educating people about conservation,' says Tim. 'Like many conservationists he is concerned about how traditional wildlife photography can create action. There is a difference between what we know and what we act upon.'

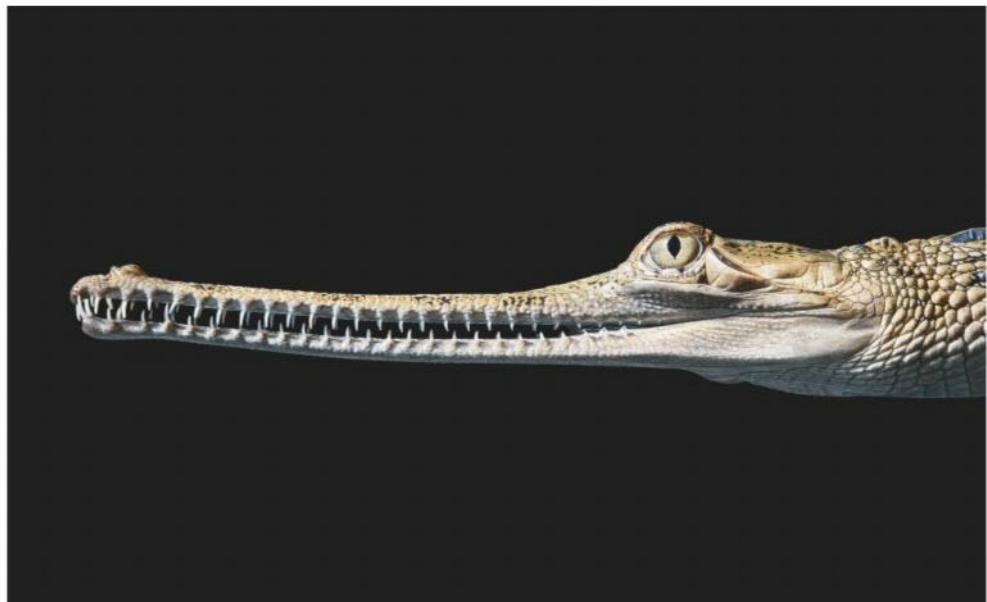
Jonathan wrote the excellent prologue and epilogue to Tim's new book.

Telling stories

In the end Tim decided to look for stories, rather than follow any prescribed 'endangered' list. The vultures are a perfect example.

'Instead of going after the glamorous animals everyone else chases in the Maasai Mara I chased vultures, because their story is so important,' he explains.

Another obvious candidate was the ploughshare tortoise (see image on page 28). Highly prized by



poachers due to their glorious shells, these land-based reptiles only live in Baly Bay in Madagascar and take 15 years to reach their breeding age. As a consequence, the Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust goes to great lengths to protect them. It might seem drastic but defacing their shells seems to be the most effective way to deter poachers. With this in mind, Tim photographed ploughshare tortoises both with and without their man-made engravings.

The western lowland gorilla was another must-have subject for the book. Habitat loss and illegal hunting are the main threats here but what's less well known is the



role these gorillas play in the tropical forest ecosystem. They have a fruit-based diet and disperse seeds via their droppings. Once again, Tim was after the story but this time he got more than he bargained for.

'There was a military clampdown during my visit,' he recalls. 'Law and order broke down, so it was a struggle to get home. The planes wouldn't pick us up because the pilots were scared. They didn't behave in a particularly honourable way and left us in Gabon. I had a wonderful experience watching the gorillas but then it comes back to humans again.'

Above: Fireflies are beetles and use light to attract a mate and warn off predators – sadly the recent use of pesticides is killing off the river snails on which they feed

Left: Makara was the first Indian gharial to be captive-bred outside of his native range. He hatched in Florida in 2016

Tim did get home eventually but the experience left its mark.

Like most images in his book, the lowland gorillas were photographed with a Canon EOS 5DS.

'It's got a 50MP sensor and is amazingly good at catching high-speed action,' enthuses Tim.

To prove his point he draws my attention to an incredible picture of a lowland gorilla scooping a handful of water to its mouth. The water has created a reflective coating on the gorilla's knuckles and you can see the forest canopy on the surface of its dark skin.

'This picture was taken handheld from a boat,' explains Tim.

Familiar faces

If you're familiar with Tim's work, you might recognise a few pictures in *Endangered* – the shots of Celebes crested macaques, for example are taken from his 'More Than Human' series. He makes no apologies for the repetition.

'There are 20 images in the book that I borrowed from my other projects, partly because it seemed crazy to go back and redo them, but also because I knew I could rework the files,' he explains.

'Photographers evolve and we know how to manage things differently, so we can take a file and start again from scratch.'



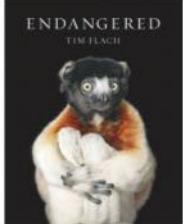
There are familiar settings, too. The pictures of military macaws were shot in Tim's studio, for example. But there were also countless times when he was forced outside his comfort zone. On one such occasion he dived to a depth of 35 metres in the sea off the Galapagos Islands with a school of hammerhead sharks circling high above him.

'I'm not an underwater photographer and I've never pretended to be but for my own integrity I needed to cover every aspect,' he says. 'Oceans make up the majority of the surface area of the planet, so I couldn't just ignore them!'

So, having photographed everything from a single cave-dwelling olm to a swarm of migrating monarch butterflies, I wonder how Tim feels about the state of the planet and our role as its custodians.

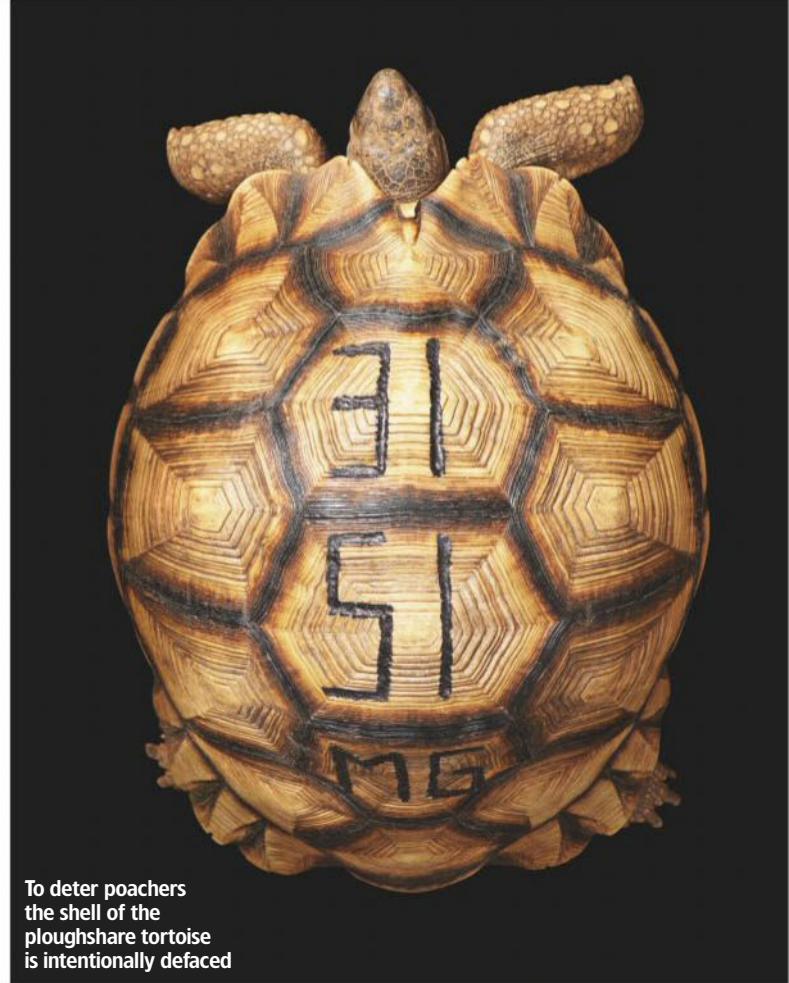
'I feel that I could, perhaps, be useful,' he explains. 'I hope the book brings stories that touch people emotionally and make them better placed to know how to move forward. Our most valued treasure is the world we are in and if we are not careful, we are going to spoil our nest and lose the most valuable thing we have.'

AP



Endangered by Tim Flach is published by Abrams (ISBN 978-1-41972-651-4) and features more than 180 images documenting the lives of threatened species.

Tim Flach studied fine art at St Martin's College of Art and Design. He emerged with a fascination for photography that has led to numerous commissions, awards, solo exhibitions and a presence in permanent collections around the world. *Endangered* is his fourth and most ambitious book to date. To find out more visit www.timflach.com.



To deter poachers the shell of the ploughshare tortoise is intentionally defaced



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We reveal the top 30 images uploaded to Photocrowd, and chosen by our expert panel, from Round Six **Creative Eye** (abstracts)



Round Six **Creative Eye**



Henrik Spranz wins a Sigma 24-35mm f/2 DG HSM Art lens. This large diameter zoom lens covers the full-frame image sensor. Its optical performance is equivalent to a fixed-focal-length lens throughout the entire zoom range and offers quality equivalent to that of three high-performance fixed-focal-length lenses at f/2 brightness. The Sigma filter that accompanies it as part of the prize offers over 10x the strength of a conventional protective filter and over 3x the strength of a high-strength protective filter. The products have a combined prize value of £1,054.98. Congratulations, Henrik!

1st

1 **Henrik Spranz** **Austria** 50pts
Canon EOS 5D Mark III, 70-200mm, 0.3sec, f/20, ISO 250
Panning your camera horizontally or vertically to create an abstract image is a popular technique with landscape photographers. It works particularly well when panning vertically to capture a group of trees, and we've seen many great examples in this round. However, this one really stood out. Devoid of colour, except the pop of warmth from the trunks, it has a monochromatic feel. Perhaps more eye-catching is the movement and shapes created from the falling snow, giving the image a three-dimensional feel.



2nd

CROWD WINNER

2 Joe Baumann USA 49pts

DJIFC300C drone, 20.7mm, 1/80sec at f/2.8, ISO100

This stunning shot won the Crowd Vote on Photocrowd, and narrowly missed out on the top spot as voted for by the AP expert panel. It was taken in northern Minnesota using a DJI drone and is a great example of how to pare a composition down to its key elements: in this case the snake-like path of the river and the lush vegetation that surrounds it. If you look closely you'll see that the forest contains multiple shades of green and yellow, adding a sense of depth to the image. Shooting from above using a short focal length has given the trees the appearance of moving outwards, adding a sense of energy.

4 Alexander Mano Varga Slovakia 47pts

Nikon D7100, 17-50mm, 1/400sec at f/9, ISO100

As photographers we can get very hung up with the idea of capturing maximum detail and sharpness, but sometimes conveying a mood or a sense of place is more important. Here Alexander experimented with zooming in and out during an exposure, and the result is a study of line and colour. An area of green takes our eyes from left to right, while the trunks direct our gaze upwards towards the blue of the sky. The trick here is to leave enough detail for the viewer to gain a sense of place, while also creating a visually pleasing abstract.

4th



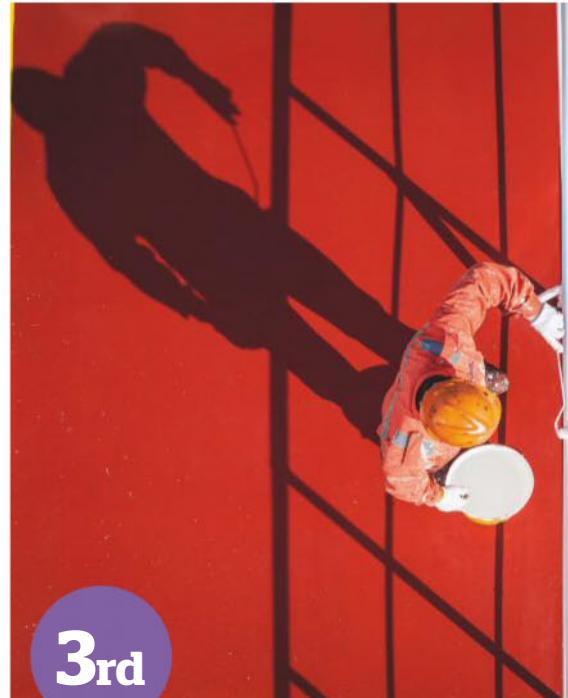


3rd

3 Zay Yar Lin Burma 48pts

Nikon D700, 24-85mm, 1/640sec at f/6.3, ISO 200

We are often told to avoid dividing the frame in half, but the balance of this picture is spot on. The swirling blue and white of the sea contrasts brilliantly with the smooth red deck, and the shadow of the painter stops the right-hand side from dominating the left. It would have been nice to see the top of the painter's head, but the slice of yellow in the top left-hand corner suggests that this was impossible. The picture was taken from the bridge wings (narrow walkways) of a ship sailing in the Gulf of Mexico.



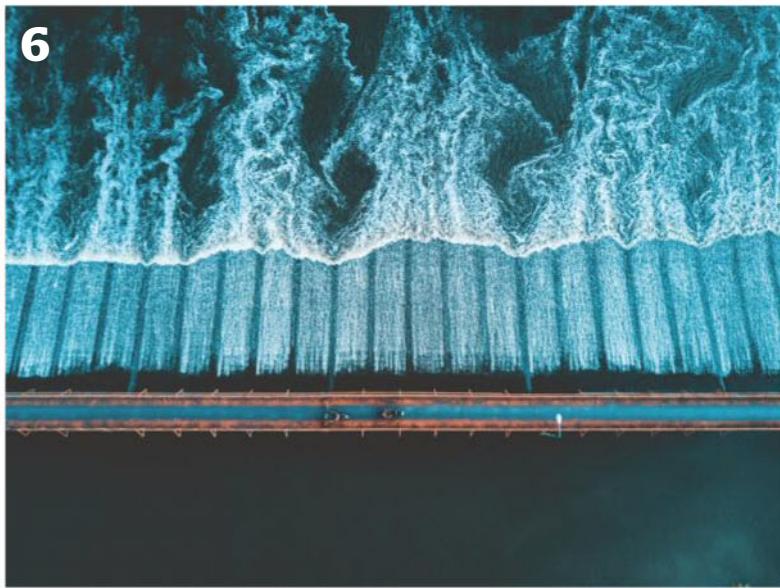
5 Athena B USA 46pts

Sony Alpha 330, 55mm, 1/500sec at f/5.6, ISO 100

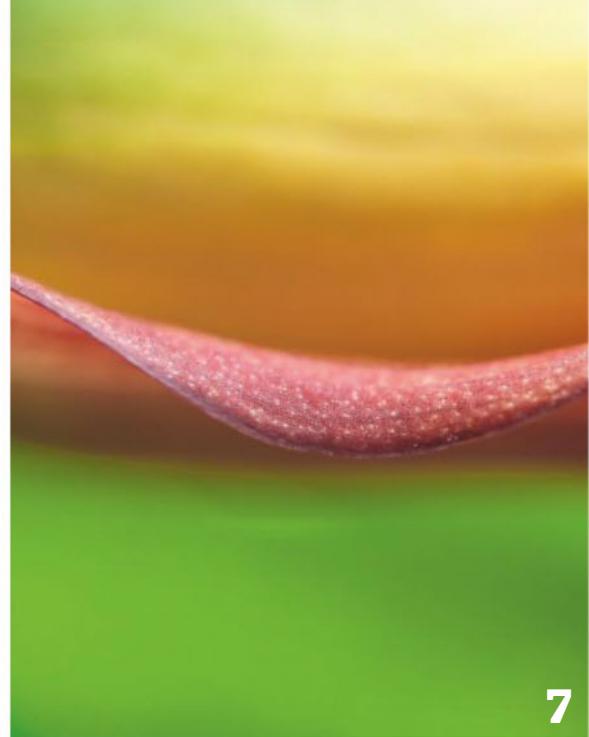
This beautiful abstract was taken in Yellowstone National Park and could easily be an aerial view of a dramatic rocky coastline. In reality the shot is a macro perspective showing the rich geology of a thermal pool. The colours are spectacular, and the rough lines and layers created by the rocks give the feeling that we are being drawn deeper and deeper into the pool. To enhance the colours and details a touch, a slight HDR filter was added during post-processing, but the colours are still pretty true to nature.

5th

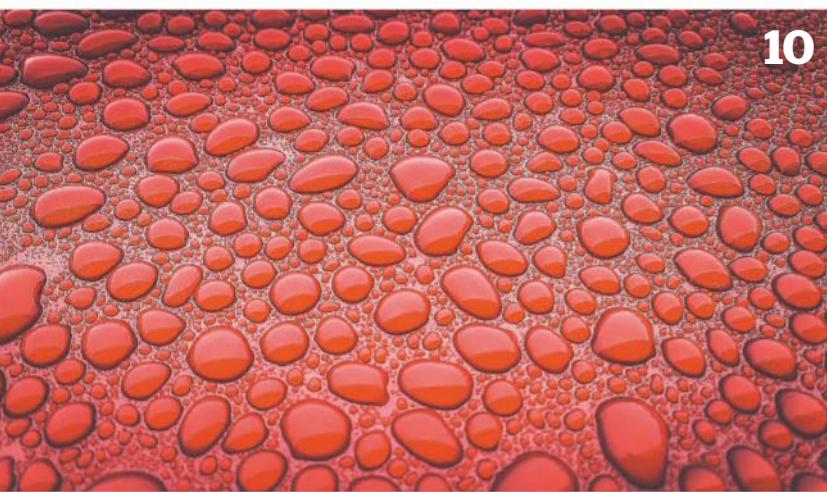




6 Tom Sweetman **UK** 45pts
DJIFC220 drone, 26.3mm, 1/320sec at f/2.2, ISO100
This aerial shot of cyclists crossing the Ping River in Thailand is striking due to the viewpoint and the care Tom has taken to apply the rule of thirds.



7 Mariusz Pietranek **Poland** 40pts
DJI FC330 drone, 3.6mm, 1/590sec at f/2.8, ISO100
The perspective achieved by using a drone has the power to surprise us, and this shot of a series of sediment tanks over a steelworks in Poland is a great example.



10 Ceri Jones **UK** 37pts
Canon EOS 6D, 105mm, 1/30sec at f/4, ISO 800
Having carefully folded rolls of coloured paper, Ceri arranged them into an aesthetically pleasing pattern and lit the paper from behind. There is a great sense of movement to the shot, and the soft colour palette works well.



14 Roberto Gaudenzi **Italy** 44pts
Canon EOS 350D, 70mm, 1/6sec at f/3.5, ISO 100
Shooting plants close-up results in extremely shallow depth of field, and requires careful positioning of the focal point – Roberto has risen to the challenge here.



15 John Bull **UK** 36pts
Sony Cyber-shot DSC-RX100 III, 25.7mm, 1/100sec at f/4, ISO 125
The canopy around the redeveloped New Street Station in Birmingham has led to a mosaic of colour and shapes.



8

8 Viraj Khorjuwekar
India 43pts

Canon EOS 600D, 18-55mm, 1/320sec at f/7.1, ISO 100

Using a slow shutter speed to capture the movement of this flock of lesser flamingos has worked well for Viraj.

9

9 Electra Stavrou
Cyprus 42pts

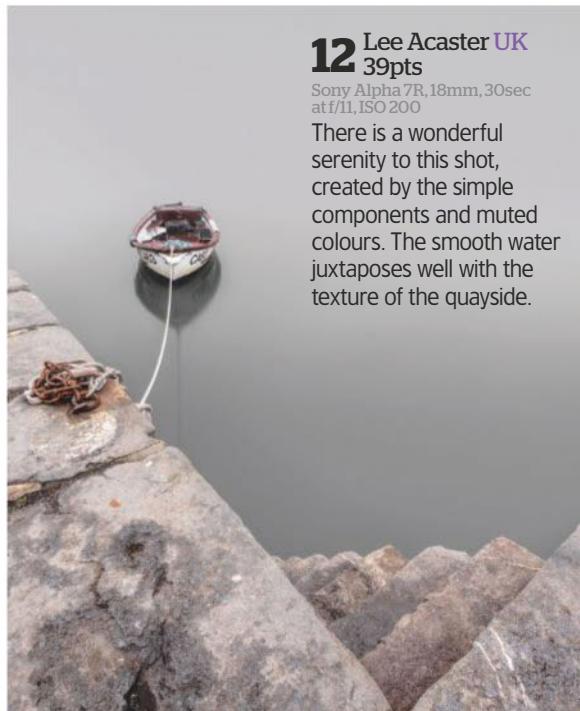
Canon EOS 600D, 18-135mm, 1/25sec at f/5.6, ISO 800

A wash of colour with one recognisable element, the subject was an artwork by Joana Vasconcelos.

12 Lee Acaster UK
39pts

Sony Alpha 7R, 18mm, 30sec at f/11, ISO 200

There is a wonderful serenity to this shot, created by the simple components and muted colours. The smooth water juxtaposes well with the texture of the quayside.



13 Matt Lewis
UK 38pts

DJI FC220 drone, 26.3mm, 1/13sec at f/2.2, ISO 100

Brighton Pier has a sense of stillness when viewed from above, away from the bustle and noise. Matt battled seagulls, wind and exposure issues to get his picture.



16



16 Pratik Pradhan India 35pts

Nikon D810, 105mm, 1/640sec at f/4.8, ISO 800

Good abstracts often engage the viewer by making them play a guessing game, but who would have thought this was a close-up of a caterpillar!

17



17 Azim Khan Ronnie Bangladesh 34pts

Canon EOS 7D Mark II, 11-16mm, 1/200sec at f/8, ISO 125

Colour is everything in this picture, but the triangle created by the three workers, and the lines leading down, create a pleasing balance.



18 Rik Ward
UK 33pts
Sony Alpha 7R II, 24-70mm,
1/125sec at f/9, ISO 1000
Rik blended two images
to create this colourful
abstract. He noticed the
reflections while on a
train into Canary Wharf.

21 Partha Chakraborty
India 30pts

Canon EOS 60D, 18-55mm, 1/100sec
at f/11, ISO 800

It takes a while to notice the
ant on this backlit leaf, but
the insect plays an integral
part in the story.



22 Mark Cornick UK 23pts

Canon EOS 6D, 17-40mm, 4secs at f/5.6, ISO 100

The wonderful tonality of this shot really makes it stand out,
and the break of light under the cloud is perfectly positioned.



25 Chris McPhee
Canada 26pts

Nikon D610, 70-200mm,
1/10sec at f/14, ISO 50

There is plenty of energy
and implied motion in
this image of a rider
taking part in a rodeo.
Using a slow shutter
speed has the added
bonus of blurring a
potentially distracting
background.

29 Jose Pessoa Neto
Portugal 22pts

Canon EOS 550D, 15-85mm,
1/60sec at f/7.1, ISO 800

There is something
hypnotic about this
combination of black
and white lines and shapes.



19

19 Alan Humphris UK 32pts
Sigma DP3 Merrill, 50mm, 3.2sec at f/14, ISO 100
This shot does an excellent job of conveying a sense of anonymity in a crowd, using ICM (Intentional Camera Movement).



20

23 Pascale Cadieux Canada 28pts
Nikon D7000, 35mm, 1/80sec at f/2.8, ISO 100
The graphic curves created by coloured sheets of paper encourage the eye to travel along their edges from one side of the frame to the other.

23



20 Amy Bateman UK 31pts

Nikon D750, 24-85mm, 1/200sec at f/4.5, ISO 400

The point where ice meets moving water is captured perfectly here, with the rich blue suggesting coldness.

24 Sam Morgan UK 27pts

Canon EOS 50D, 17-85mm, 1/640sec at f/5.6, ISO 400

The colours, angles and curves of this building in London have been captured wonderfully by Sam.



24

26

26 Taylor Newlun USA 25pts

Canon EOS 70D, 18-135mm, 1/640sec at f/5.6, ISO 100

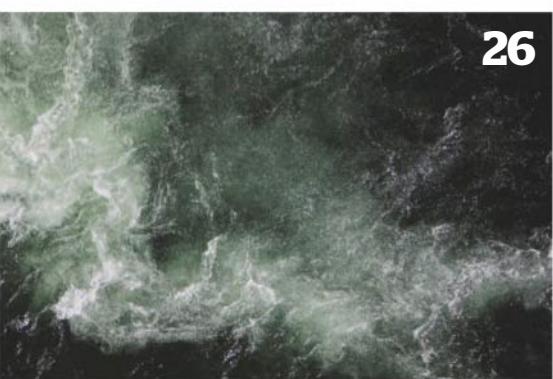
This photograph has the dark tonality of a Turner painting, and it's the kind of image you could hang on your wall and stare at for hours on end – beautiful.

27 Norbert Stojke Germany 24pts

Nikon D5300, 55-300mm, 1/200sec at f/5, ISO 800

There is a wonderful coldness to this picture, but the orange tinge of the reeds and bulrushes makes for a great reflection.

27



30

30 Carol Hall UK 21pts

Canon EOS 750D, 15-85mm, 1/80sec at f/5, ISO 400

The afternoon light really accentuates the curves of the walls and ceiling of the Cast Theatre in Doncaster.

The 2017 leaderboard

The leaderboard stays much the same at the end of the sixth round of APOY. Henrik Spranz claimed first place earning himself another 50 points and keeping him in the lead by quite some distance. Lee Acaster scored 39 points this round pushing him into the top ten in 8th place.

1	Henrik Spranz	343 pts	6	Heather Allen	97pts
2	Marco Tagliarino	140pts	7	Neil Burnell	76pts
3	Simon Hadleigh-Sparks	122pts	8	Lee Acaster	74pts
4	Elena Paraskeva	116pts	9	Agnieszka Maruszczak	72pts
5	Dominic Beaven	114pts	9	Linda Wride	72pts

To enter and find details of the upcoming rounds of APOY 2017 visit www.amateurphotographer.co.uk/apoy and click Enter Now

LOCATION GUIDE

Avebury, Wiltshire

This well-known historic spot holds a wealth of photographic opportunities, says **Jeremy Walker**

KIT LIST

▼ Lenses

Avebury is predominantly a wideangle lens location, perhaps close-in with the stones towering over you, using long exposures to allow the clouds to blur through the shot. My go-to lens is the Nikon 24-70mm.

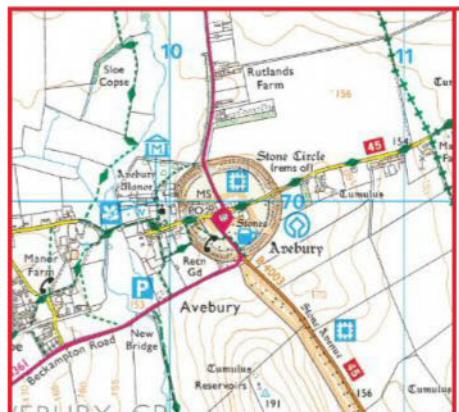


▼ Filters

A selection of filters is handy: a polariser for eliminating haze, brightening blue skies and adding contrast, and a Lee Filters Big or Super Stopper to achieve long exposures to blur movement in the clouds.

▼ Tripod

It goes without saying that a tripod is vital when using filters to shoot long exposures and when shooting in low-light conditions. Fortunately you don't have far to walk so you won't need to lug it around for too long.



THE SMALL and picturesque village of Avebury lies at the heart of the rolling Marlborough Downs, 11 miles south of Swindon and the M4. The village is situated within one of the largest Neolithic stone circles in Europe and Avebury Henge has quite rightly been made a UNESCO World Heritage Site. There are three stone circles, a stone avenue and a bank and ditch earthwork and entrance is free.

The whole site of the stone circles, ditches and earthworks, as well as the recently discovered square formation of stones, were not constructed as one entity, it was developed over a period of several hundreds of years from approximately 3000BC to 2400BC. Some of the stones weigh more than 40 tons and measure up to four metres high. The construction of the stone circles at Avebury remains a mystery and many theories abound, from religious ritual site to links with King Arthur.

Avebury is owned by English Heritage but managed by The National Trust, and as such members of both organisations can park in the only car park for free; others will have to use the pay-and-display machines, which handily take cards. It is virtually impossible to park anywhere else in or near the village. The stone circles are officially open during 'any reasonable time in daylight hours' but turning up for a sunrise shoot has never been a problem. The only difficulty will be the parking, as the car park will be closed.



Above: The West Kennet Long Barrow, Avebury

Right: Standing stones at the Avebury Stone Circle, shot at dawn



Jeremy Walker

Award-winning professional photographer Jeremy Walker has been shooting landscapes, architecture and people for more than 25 years. Visit www.jeremywalker.co.uk

Shooting advice

Avebury is at its best during the autumn and winter. With low-lying autumn mists, fog and a touch of frost the whole site can take on a wonderful ethereal mood and atmosphere. There will also be significantly fewer people. The whole site has views and angles from every direction but there is very little elevation so most shots will be from within the circles and relatively close-up. Sunrise and shooting into the light would be my favoured time of day. As the main road passes right through the site, watch out for road and fences in your shots and unsightly concrete markers showing where stones once stood.

Food and lodging

The National Trust has a tearoom at Avebury offering a limited menu, while The Red Lion pub is situated next to the stones. For accommodation try Avebury Lodge bed and breakfast, a fine Georgian house in the heart of the village. For a wider selection of food and accommodation, the town of Marlborough is six miles away.

Further afield

The stone circles of Avebury are incredible to shoot, but just a stone's throw away is the mysterious Silbury Hill and West Kennet Long Barrow, both on the road to Marlborough. The Ridgeway, often described as the country's oldest road, is also accessible by foot from Avebury.

Warning

The area of Avebury, Silbury Hill and West Kennet Long Barrow has become an area well known to thieves, and car break-ins are common. You have been warned.

An atmospheric image of Silbury Hill taken at dawn



Top mirrorless cameras

We reveal our favourite mirrorless cameras on the market, from sub-£400 models right up to the finest full-frame examples that rival the best DSLRs

Accessories

Mirrorless cameras are supported by a range of accessories. You can even personalise some with a screw-in soft shutter release.

Design

Some mirrorless cameras have thin, wide bodies whereas others are shaped similarly to DSLRs to provide more to wrap your hand around.



Price

If you have a strict budget, don't worry. There are some excellent examples of mirrorless cameras out there from as little as £379 with a kit lens.

Lenses

In their infancy, mirrorless cameras weren't supported by many lenses. However, all of the cameras here are well supported by a good range of lenses.

Sensor

The size of the sensor varies between models. Some may feature Four Thirds sensors whereas others will be APS-C or full frame.

Data file

	Panasonic Lumix GX800	Sony Alpha 6000	Fujifilm X-T20	Fujifilm X-T2	Olympus OM-D E-M1 Mark II	Panasonic Lumix DC-GH5	Sony Alpha 7 II	Sony Alpha 7R II
Price	£379 (with lens)	£449 (body only)	£799 (body only)	£1,599 (body only)	£1,849 (body only)	£1,699 (body only)	£1,199 (body only)	£2,499 (body only)
Sensor	16MP Four Thirds Live MOS	24.3MP APS-C CMOS	24.3MP APS-C X-Trans CMOS III	24.3MP APS-C X-Trans CMOS III	20.4MP Four Thirds Live MOS	20.3MP Four Thirds Live MOS	24.3MP Full-frame CMOS	42.4.2MP Full-frame CMOS
ISO (expandable ISO shown in brackets)	ISO 200-25,600 (ISO 100)	ISO 100-12,800 (ISO 25,600)	ISO 200-12,800 (ISO 100-51,200)	ISO 200-12,800 (ISO 100-51,200)	ISO 200-25,600 (ISO 64)	ISO 200-25,600 (ISO 100)	ISO 100-25,600 (ISO 50)	ISO 100-25,600 (ISO 50-102,400)
Burst speed	5fps	11fps	8fps/14fps with electronic shutter	8fps/14fps with electronic shutter	18fps/60fps with electronic shutter	12fps	5fps	5fps



Best entry-level Panasonic Lumix GX800

● Price £379 (with 12-32mm lens)

PANASONIC – alongside its Micro Four Thirds co-developer Olympus – has been making mirrorless cameras longer than anyone else. The GX800 is Panasonic's current entry-level mirrorless model and, as such, is primarily aimed at casual users looking for an easy-to-use camera that's capable of better image quality than a smartphone or basic compact.

It's built around the same 16MP Live MOS sensor as the more advanced GX80, which results in a similarly high standard of image quality overall. Image processing is taken care of via Panasonic's proprietary Venus Engine, which facilitates a native sensitivity range of ISO 200-25,600 and a top shooting speed of 5fps. In addition the GX800 is also capable of recording 4K video at up to 30fps, and comes with Panasonic's innovative 4K Photo mode, which enables 8MP still images to be extracted from 4K video footage in a variety of ways to ensure that you never miss a moment. The GX800 even gets a dedicated 4K Photo Mode button located on the top-plate.

In terms of size and weight the GX800 is the smallest and lightest mirrorless camera in the Lumix range. On top of this, it benefits from some classic retro rangefinder styling, giving it an undoubtedly stylish appearance. While buttons are scarce and the camera lacks an electronic viewfinder – or indeed any means to attach one – the rear display flips up by 180° so that it can be made to face the same direction as the lens for easy selfies. The LCD display doubles up as a touchscreen, providing intuitive control over the camera and its settings.



Best mid-range Sony Alpha 6000

● Price £449 (body only)

THE Sony Alpha 6000 is a cheaper alternative to the more recent and significantly more expensive Alpha 6300 (£829 body-only) and Alpha 6500 (£1,279 body-only) models that succeeded it. While there are some areas where it shows its age, it remains a capable camera with a good specification that provides unbeatable value for money at its price point.

Built around a 24.3MP APS-C Exmor CMOS sensor and BIONZ X image processor, the A6000 offers a native sensitivity range of ISO 100-25,600 along with an extended setting of ISO 51,200. Continuous shooting speed, meanwhile, is a very respectable 11fps. While there's no support for 4K video, the A6000 does provide 1080p Full HD video capture at up to 60fps. In addition, it comes with built-in Wi-Fi and NFC connectivity along with support for Sony's PlayMemories apps that can be used to add extra features.

The hybrid AF system encompasses 179 phase-detection AF points plus a further 25 contrast-detect AF points for speedy focus acquisition. The A6000 is fitted with a 3in, 921k-dot LCD display that can be tilted up and down; however, unlike the A6500, there's no touchscreen functionality. Above this sits a 1.44m-dot EVF that's still perfectly usable, even though its resolution isn't as high as the A6300 and A6500 – both of which come equipped with 2.36m-dot EVFs. Build quality, as with all Sony mirrorless cameras, is very good with the A6000 benefiting from robust (albeit not weather-sealed) polycarbonate and magnesium alloy construction.



Key features

- Price £379 (with 12-32mm lens)
- 16MP Micro Four Thirds Live MOS sensor
- ISO 200-25,600 (expandable to ISO 100)
- 5fps continuous shooting
- 3in, 1.04m-dot flip-up LCD
- 4K video capture



Best for enthusiasts Fujifilm X-T20

● Price £799 (body only)

FUJIFILM'S X-T20 succeeds 2015's X-T10 model and brings with it improvements that are, at least in part, borrowed from Fujifilm's flagship X-T2 model. This includes Fujifilm's latest X-Trans CMOS II sensor, which provides 24.3MP of effective resolution. This is paired with Fujifilm's most recent X Processor Pro image processor to provide a native sensitivity range of ISO 200-12,800 that can be further expanded to ISO 100-51,200. While burst shooting remains at a steady 8fps using the mechanical shutter, the X-T20 can also shoot at up to 14fps via its electronic shutter.

The X-T20's hybrid autofocus system has also been improved and now employs a total of 91 AF points, compared to 49 on the X-T10. The new AF module includes 49 phase-detection AF points, located in the central portion of the viewfinder. The rear LCD display also benefits from a slightly higher resolution (1.04m-dots vs 922k-dots) while adding tilt and touchscreen control to the mix. Last but not least, the X-T20 is also capable of recording 4K video whereas the X-T10 maxed out at 1080p Full HD capture.

The X-T20 retains the same 2.36m-dot electronic viewfinder, which provides 100% coverage at a magnification of 0.62x. In terms of design, the X-T20 shares the same stylish retro-rangefinder aesthetic of its predecessor, with milled aluminium dials on the top-plate and dual control wheels providing a pleasingly tactile user experience. Unlike its senior relative, the X-T2, the X-T20 is not weather sealed and isn't supported by a battery grip.



Key features

- Price £799 (body only)
- 24.3MP APS-C X-Trans CMOS III sensor
- ISO 200-12,800 (expandable to ISO 100-51,200)
- 14fps continuous shooting (via electronic shutter)
- 3in, 1.04m-dot tiltable touchscreen LCD
- 4K video capture



Best high-end Fujifilm X-T2

- Price £1,599 (body only)

THE FUJIFILM X-T2 sits alongside the X-Pro2 as one of Fujifilm's two flagship models. The main difference between the two is that the X-Pro 2 is targeted more at still photographers who regularly use small lenses, whereas the X-T2 is positioned as more of an all-rounder that can be easily used with larger telephoto lenses and as a videography tool. As such it gains some additional features including 4K video, an articulated rear screen and a superior EVF. In terms of design the X-T2 closely follows the DSLR-like template of its predecessor – 2014's X-T1 model – with a sculpted handgrip, raised EVF and weather sealing.

Internally, the X-T2 is built around a 24.3MP X-Trans CMOS III APS-C sensor and an X-Processor Pro image processor. The X-T2's mechanical shutter offers a top speed of 1/8000sec, although switching to the electronic shutter increases this to 1/32,000sec. Continuous shooting maxes out at 8fps unaided, however this can be increased to 11fps and 14fps by attaching the optional VPB-XT2 Power Booster grip (£249).

Autofocus is taken care of via an advanced hybrid AF system that incorporates 325 individual AF points, 169 of which are of the phase-detection type. While coverage doesn't quite stretch to 100% of the viewfinder, focus acquisition times are impressively fast. The X-T2 also boasts a number of useful AF-C customisation modes, which can be used to more accurately track moving subjects in a range of ways. In terms of its looks, build quality and performance the X-T2 is hard to beat.

**Amateur
Photographer**
Testbench
GOLD
★★★★★

Key features

- Price £1,599 (body only)
- 24.3MP APS-C X-Trans CMOS III
- ISO 200-12,800 (expandable to ISO 100-51,200)
- 8fps continuous shooting
- 3in, 1.04m-dot vari-angle LCD
- 4K video capture



Best high-end for speed Olympus OM-D E-M1 Mark II

- Price £1,849 (body only)

IN RECENT years the digital camera industry has seen a move towards the use of ultra-fast image processors that can handle the increased data produced by high-resolution sensors and speedily process it, thereby enabling photographers to shoot extended bursts at high speed for longer than was previously possible. Released early last year, the flagship OM-D E-M1 II epitomises this new breed of camera in that it's built for speed.

While the OM-D E-M1 II's 20.4MP sensor represents a step up from before, it's the TruePic VIII image processor that really makes the OM-D E-M1 II tick. This utilises two quad core processors, one of which is assigned to image processing duties while the other drives the AF system. This enables the OM-D E-M1 II to shoot a burst at 18fps using the mechanical shutter while maintaining active AF. If you want to shoot faster, the electronic shutter can be employed to facilitate speeds of up to 60fps.

Autofocus is another area where the OM-D E-M1 II shines. Whereas the original OM-D E-M1 used a 37-point system, the E-M1 II offers an advanced 121-point system that covers around 80% of the frame with phase-detection AF points, all of which are of the cross-type variety. Furthermore the OM-D benefits from built-in 5-axis image stabilisation technology, 4K video recording at up to 30fps along with twin SD card slots and built-in Wi-Fi. In terms of construction, the OM-D E-M1 II benefits from durable magnesium alloy construction and is weather-sealed against dust and moisture.

**Amateur
Photographer**
Testbench
GOLD
★★★★★

Key features

- Price £1,849 (body only)
- 20.4MP Four Thirds Live MOS sensor
- ISO 200-25,600 (expandable to ISO 64)
- 18fps continuous shooting
- 3in, 1.03m-dot vari-angle touchscreen LCD
- 4K video capture



Best for video Panasonic Lumix DC-GH5

- Price £1,699 (body only)

PANASONIC'S GH series has long been targeted at video enthusiasts and the GH5 pushes this particular envelope even further, not only with the inclusion of 4K video footage at 50p/60p, but also with the addition of broadcast-standard 10-bit 10:2:2 recording. In fact, this latter feature is likely to be a chief selling point for committed videographers who demand greater flexibility at the editing stage. Naturally, the GH5 also provides a range of 1080p Full HD and 720p HD quality options, with microphone and headphone ports all present and correct alongside an HDMI port.

While the GH5 boasts class-leading video capabilities, it's no slouch in the still image department either. The camera is built around a new 20.3MP Live MOS sensor and Panasonic's latest Venus Engine 10 image processor. Autofocus is taken care of via a new 225-point AF system that utilises Panasonic's Depth from Defocus contrast-detect technology to provide a claimed focus acquisition time of just 0.05secs. In addition, the GH5 also benefits from Panasonic's Dual IS 2 five-axis image stabilisation technology.

Elsewhere, the GH5 comes with Panasonic's new 6K Photo Mode that enables 18MP still images to be captured at up to 30fps. While the GH5 is not particularly small or light for a mirrorless camera, build quality is very much on the money, with the GH5's durable magnesium alloy chassis also benefiting from dust and moisture sealing. If you're looking for the ultimate stills/video hybrid then the GH5 should be at the top of your list.

**Amateur
Photographer**
Testbench
Recommended
★★★★★

Key features

- Price £1,699 (body only)
- 20.3MP Four Thirds Live MOS
- 200-25,600 (expandable to ISO 100)
- 12fps continuous shooting
- 3.2in, 1.62m-dot vari-angle touchscreen
- 10-bit 4:2:2 4K video capture



Best affordable full-frame Sony Alpha 7 II

● Price £1,199 (body only)

SONY currently offers three models within its full-frame Alpha 7 range. The 24.3MP Alpha 7 II is best thought of as an all-rounder and delivers a balanced combination of resolution, flexibility and customisation.

Released in 2015, the Alpha 7 II succeeds the first-generation Alpha 7 model that came out in 2014. While the original was hailed as something of a technological breakthrough on account of being the first mirrorless camera to incorporate a full-frame sensor, it did suffer from some handling issues. The A7 II sets out to address these. To this end, it's an unqualified success; the handgrip is more pronounced, and the button layout is rearranged to make operating the camera much more intuitive.

Internally the A7 II shares the same 24MP full-frame sensor and BIONZ X image processor of its predecessor, which provides a native sensitivity range of ISO 100–25,600, along with a continuous shooting speed of 5fps. In addition, the A7 II also uses the same 124-point Hybrid AF system as the original that employs 99 phase-detection points alongside 25 contrast-detect points for impressively hasty focus acquisition. While there's no 4K video support, the A7 II does provide an impressive array of 1080p Full HD and 720p HD video capture options.

One new feature for the A7 II is the addition of built-in Sony SteadyShot 5-axis image stabilisation technology.

This provides up to 4.5 stops of compensation, which is extremely useful for shooting handheld at slower shutter speeds or with long telephoto lenses.



Key features

- Price £1,199 (body only)
- 24.3MP full-frame CMOS
- ISO 100–25,600 (expandable to ISO 50)
- 5fps continuous shooting
- 3in, 1.22m-dot tiltable LCD
- 1080p Full HD video capture



Best full-frame for image quality Sony Alpha 7R II

● Price £2,499 (body only)

WHEREAS the Alpha 7 II is positioned as the all-rounder and the Alpha 7S II is engineered for optimal low-light performance, the A7R II fulfils the role of resolution heavyweight within Sony's flagship full-frame mirrorless trio. It shows marked improvements over the A7R in just about every department. Not only has resolution been upped from 36.2MP to 42.4MP, the A7R II doesn't suffer from the same performance compromises of its predecessor. Indeed, the A7R II is able to match the A7 II for continuous shooting speed (5fps) at nearly twice the resolution, and even outperforms it by two EV stops with its extended sensitivity range of 50–102,400.

The A7R II further benefits from the addition of a more advanced Hybrid autofocus system than found inside the A7 II and A7S II. This employs 399 phase-detection and 25 contrast-detect AF points for viewfinder-wide coverage and all-but-instantaneous focus lock. The A7R II also matches the A7S II with its support for 4K video capture at 24/30fps, but adds the ability to record 4K footage using the full width of its 35mm sensor.

Elsewhere, the A7R II benefits from all the usual bells and whistles you'd expect of a flagship model including tough magnesium alloy construction, weather-sealing, a large and super-sharp EVF, a high-resolution tiltable LCD display, a wide array of physical controls and generous customisation options. All this combines to make it one of the most desirable and costly options in this mirrorless roundup.



Key features

- £2,499 (body only)
- 42.4MP full-frame BSI CMOS sensor
- ISO 100–25,600 (expandable to ISO 50–102,400)
- 5fps continuous shooting
- 3in, 1.23m-dot tiltable LCD
- 4K video capture

Jargon explained

Hybrid AF systems

It used to be the case that while traditional DSLRs came with speedy phase-detection autofocus, mirrorless cameras were stuck with slower contrast-detect AF. Over time though, contrast-detect technology has vastly improved. And now an increasing number of mirrorless cameras are using innovative hybrid AF systems that combine on-sensor phase-detection with traditional contrast-detect AF. And with new super-fast processors dedicated to autofocus duties, some mirrorless cameras are now able to outperform DSLRs in terms of AF speed.

Rear LCD display

The quality and functionality of the rear LCD display is an important consideration of any mirrorless model, especially if it doesn't have an electronic viewfinder (EVF). Naturally, the higher the resolution of the screen the sharper your images will look on it. In addition, an increasing number of mirrorless cameras are now adding touchscreen functionality, which makes operating the camera speedier and more intuitive. How the screen is attached to the camera body is another important consideration – some are fixed, some can be tilted, while others use the much more flexible vari-angle design.

Design

Broadly speaking, mirrorless cameras tend to fall into one of two camps in terms of their general styling: on the one hand are those that take classic retro-rangefinder cameras as their inspiration, while others are designed to mimic the appearance and handling characteristics of a DSLR. Which type is right for you is all down to personal preference. Just be sure to take build quality into account, as cheaper mirrorless cameras are unlikely to benefit from the tougher magnesium alloy and weather-sealed construction of more expensive ones.

Video

The ability to capture video has long been a big selling point of mirrorless cameras, and all of the ones listed in this round-up are at least capable of recording 1080p Full HD video. An increasing number of models are adding 4K video capture, although this is not by any means universal. Not yet anyway. For those serious about their video the Panasonic GH5 is currently the only mirrorless model to offer broadcast quality 10-bit 10:2:2 4K capture. Be sure to check whether your desired model sports a dedicated microphone and/or headphone input as this does vary between models.

Building the Alpha 9

Andy Westlake takes you on a behind-the-scenes tour through Sony's operations in Japan and Thailand, revealing the philosophy and technology that underpins this year's most revolutionary camera

Sony's Alpha 9 is without doubt one of the most exciting cameras of the year. It's a high-speed, full-frame, mirrorless model that challenges, and in many ways surpasses, pro-DSLRs in the last bastion of their superiority, namely sports and action shooting. On a recent trip to Japan and Thailand with Sony Europe, I was lucky enough to receive a rare insight into the thinking behind its design, and the state-of-the-art manufacturing facilities that make it possible.

It's easy to forget, but Sony is a relatively recent player in the interchangeable-lens camera market. It began by acquiring Konica Minolta in 2006, with its first genuinely homegrown DSLR being the Alpha 700 in 2007. But the most significant milestones in its progress have been the introduction of the mirrorless E-mount in 2010, followed by the full-frame Alpha 7 system in 2013. Since then, the firm has gone from strength to strength and broken Canon and Nikon's duopoly on the high-end professional market. Sony now claims to be the market leader in terms of mirrorless camera sales in Europe, and second for sales of full-frame cameras behind Canon (at least before the launch of the Nikon D850).

Along the way, Sony has shown a serious appetite for innovation, repeatedly gambling on making new types of camera that haven't been seen before, in the hope of stimulating an often moribund-looking camera market. But its relative inexperience also shows, with its cameras often being less well-rounded packages compared with its main competitors, particularly in terms of handling. It also doesn't seem to have established the same kind of emotional connection with its users that's been achieved by the likes of Fujifilm, whose commitment to continually improving existing models via major firmware updates has established a fiercely loyal following. In contrast, Sony can give the impression of

being a faceless electronics giant, brilliant at squeezing advanced technology into tiny camera bodies but less good at understanding what photographers really want from them.

Perhaps in a bid to overcome this perception, the firm recently invited a group of European photographic journalists on a tour of its head office in Tokyo, its giant sensor-production factory in Kumamoto, and its camera and lens plant near Bangkok. Along the way, we spoke to senior managers and engineers, and gained rare behind-the-scenes insight into the thinking behind its operations.

Tokyo - the nerve centre

If there's one place that counts as the birthplace of Sony's cameras, it's the firm's corporate headquarters in the Shinagawa



district of Tokyo. This is where senior managers devise the core concepts behind new products, and engineers work out how to overcome the technological hurdles involved in bringing these ideas to fruition. Along the way, they work closely with the sensor experts in Kumamoto, aware well in advance of all the new technologies that are in development, and pushing the sensor engineers into getting the most possible out of them.

In the case of the Alpha 9, the intention was to produce a mirrorless camera optimised for shooting sports and action. In technical terms, this was distilled down to a deceptively simple-looking design brief – how to build a camera capable of shooting at 20 frames per second with a zero-blackout viewfinder, while taking focus and exposure readings, and



Golden Pavilion, Kyoto, Japan
Sony Alpha 9, Tokina Firin 20mm f/2 FE MF,
1/320sec at f/8, ISO 100



viewing the live view feed at 60fps. But to achieve this, all of the camera's core components had to be designed from scratch – including the viewfinder, image processor and the stacked CMOS image sensor.

Indeed, it's the sensor, and its layered design, that really makes the Alpha 9 possible. Its backside-illuminated architecture captures as much light as possible, but far more importantly, it permits the addition of a large amount of on-chip memory and a high-speed digital image processing circuit. This, ultimately, is what allows the camera's high-speed, low-distortion shutter and super-fast shooting rates. It's clear that Sony's ability to make its own sensors and seamlessly integrate them into new camera designs gives it a real edge over its competitors. Other manufacturers can do similar things, for sure, but none can manage quite the same combination of high image quality and outright speed.

It's not just the sensor, though; the Alpha 9's viewfinder panel is also purpose designed and homegrown. Indeed, it's made in the same factory as the sensor, using a lot of the same technology and production processes. It employs a white electroluminescent panel with a colour filter overlay that combines high brightness and contrast, a wide colour gamut and rapid response times, all in a small form factor (the panel itself measures just 7.5x10mm). It's clear that Sony considers this display to be just as crucial to the camera's abilities as the sensor.

The final piece of the jigsaw is the camera's firmware and, in particular, its autofocus algorithms. Here, Sony worked closely with professional sports photographers, running through multiple cycles of assessing images

Above: Sony's headquarters in Tokyo, Japan

Below and right:
Sony Alpha 9 top
plates, unpainted
and finished



shot with prototype cameras, analysing any focus errors and then rapidly addressing them with new firmware in time for a new round of testing. After six months of intensive field testing and iterative improvements – far more than for any previous Sony camera – the Alpha 9 was ready to go to market.

Mirrorless for action

Despite the rapid improvement of mirrorless cameras, many photographers have assumed that DSLRs would remain the first choice for sports and action due to their sophisticated phase-detection autofocus systems. But Sony thinks very differently. Its engineers described with impressive clarity why they believe mirrorless cameras to be better suited to high-speed photography, and explained how their vision is realised in the Alpha 9.

First, though, we need to think about how

DSLRs work. In essence, they developed directly from film cameras, with a digital sensor replacing the film, which means that it's kept in a light-sealed box until the moment of exposure. Focusing and metering, therefore, require a complex system of optics and

secondary sensors. A semi-silvered mirror directs most of the light from the lens to the viewfinder, with the rest being deflected downwards by a secondary mirror to an autofocus sensor in the base of the camera. Light metering requires yet another sensor that's located in the viewfinder assembly. To make an exposure, the mirror flips up and the shutter opens, in the process blocking out both the viewfinder and the autofocus sensor.

This design has certain inevitable consequences. Autofocus measurements can only be taken when the mirror is down and stable, meaning that the camera has to predict where the subject will be when the exposure is actually made, based on readings taken a fraction of second earlier. But when the subject is moving erratically, this can lead to focusing errors. The proportion of the image that can be covered by the autofocus sensor

is also limited by the size of the sub-mirror, particularly on full-frame DSLRs where it's less than half of the frame height. If the subject moves outside this area, the camera can't focus on it.

In a mirrorless camera, however, composition, autofocus and metering all utilise the main image sensor directly. This brings a range of advantages: the camera is able to autofocus accurately anywhere in the frame, while keeping track of subjects as they move around it. By using an electronic shutter, the sensor can also be kept exposed to incoming light all the time, giving a zero-blackout viewfinder that makes panning with moving subjects much easier. What's more, it's possible for the camera to take focus measurements continually up to the moment of exposure (at a rate of 60 per second, in the case of the Alpha 9), allowing it to pinpoint the subject's exact location when the shutter is released.

This might sound like Sony's engineers rationalising their pet product, but having used the Alpha 9, I'm convinced they are correct. Its ability to pick up a subject anywhere in the frame and hold focus on it while shooting at high speed is uncanny, and all made possible by the zero-blackout design. The fact that the camera makes lots of small focus adjustments during continuous shooting, rather than one larger movement per frame, also seems to help in giving extraordinary autofocus accuracy. The Alpha 9 isn't perfect, but it gives Canon and Nikon's top-end models a serious run for their money, which is remarkable given that it's Sony's first attempt at a pro-sports mirrorless camera. It's anyone's guess how far ahead Sony will be after another generation or two of development.

While the vision and skill of Sony's hardware engineers is beyond question, I do have some doubts about the coherency of the firm's overall approach. For example, the camera-design team repeatedly stressed how important they felt it was to make the Alpha 7-series and Alpha 9 bodies as small as possible, to maximise their size advantage relative to the competition. But the lens



Above: Sony Alpha 9 sensor assembly

'The A9 gives Canon and Nikon's top-end models a serious run for their money'

designers clearly have no such objective, so routinely produce huge optics such as the FE 24-70mm f/2.8 GM that negate this advantage. The camera designers also seemed somewhat taken aback by suggestions that the Alpha 9 would be a better fit for its role if it were made larger, to make it easier to use with gloves and better-balanced with larger lenses.

Likewise, when asked about firmware updates to fix the Alpha 9's most obvious operational flaws, Sony's engineers were unprepared to make any specific promises. But to be fair, the firm has a decent track record in this regard; for example, it's steadily improved the Alpha 7 II over its lifespan, most recently with firmware version 4 in August when the camera was almost three years old. Hopefully, it will do the same for the Alpha 9, listening carefully to user feedback along the way.

On systems and lenses

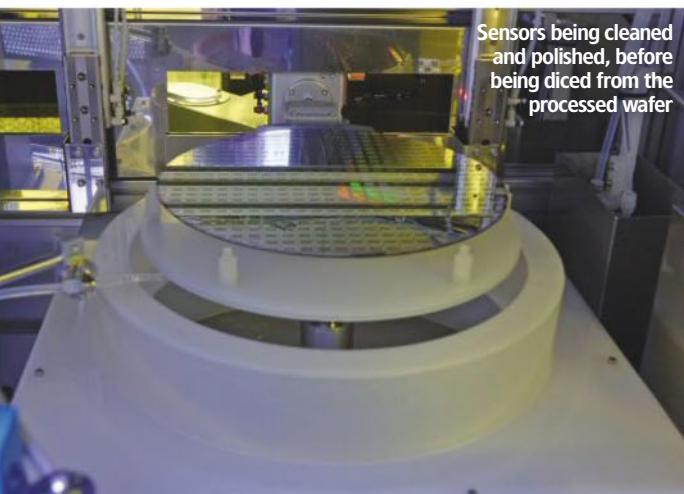
One of the more interesting discussions we had with Sony's product management team related to its priorities regarding lens

Sony's vast sensor factory in Kumamoto, on the island of Kyushu, Japan

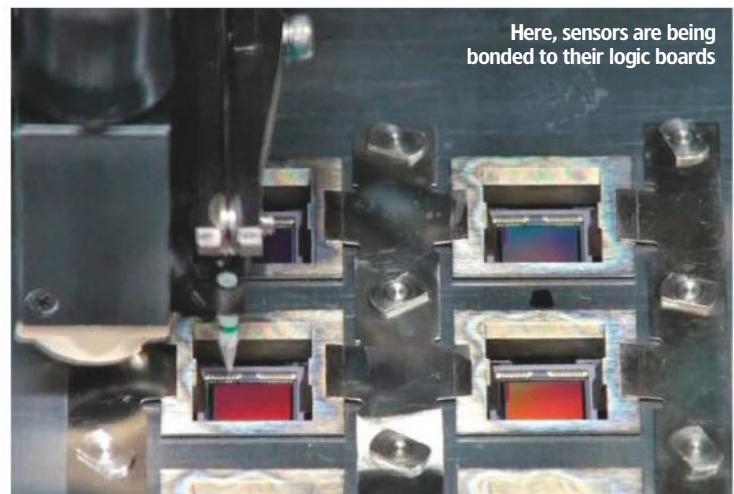


development. The firm has two lens mounts on the go – the legacy Alpha mount inherited from Minolta used in its SLR-like models, and the mirrorless E-mount – and makes both full-frame and APS-C sensor cameras with each mount. But since the launch of the full-frame mirrorless Alpha 7, it's concentrated on making FE lenses to match, with no new APS-C lenses and just a couple of updated A-mount optics. The firm's explanation for this is that it simply reflects the state of the market: full-frame users are typically serious amateurs or professionals who buy more lenses and demand a wider range of options than APS-C shooters. Therefore, Sony is sensibly focusing its efforts where the demand for new lenses is strongest and it will make the most sales. So while nobody in the company is ever going

Sensors being cleaned and polished, before being diced from the processed wafer



Here, sensors are being bonded to their logic boards





to talk about upcoming, but as yet unannounced products, it's the surest bet imaginable that over the next year or two it will concentrate on releasing high-end long telephotos matched to the Alpha 9.

Despite this, Sony is adamant it doesn't consider its APS-C E-mount lens range to be complete, and expects to revisit it in future to add some more interesting optics. However, the prospect of new lenses for Alpha-mount users seems more remote; instead, the firm plans to provide updated SLT bodies from time to time. Don't expect to see a Sony medium-format system appear any time soon, either.

Kumamoto - world of sensors

From Tokyo we travelled to the city of Kumamoto, some 550 miles west and to the south, on the southernmost of Japan's main islands called Kyushu. It's a hub of Japan's semiconductor industry, thanks to a plentiful supply of very clean water and relatively low labour costs. Surrounded by beautiful countryside, it feels like an unlikely location for Sony's vast sensor manufacturing plant that's one of the most advanced in the world.

The sheer scale of what goes on here is mind-boggling. Its two huge buildings include six floors of clean-rooms, in which environmental contaminants are kept to a strictly controlled minimum. Sony told us the plant outputs four million image sensors every single day, and while most are surely destined for use in mobile devices, this is also where the sensors in most digital cameras come from. If you own a compact camera with a 1in sensor, any Sony camera, or indeed almost any recent

model from another manufacturer, this is most likely where its sensor was born. The main exception is Canon, which makes all its own sensors for its EOS cameras.

The factory is an exceptionally high-tech environment in which sensor production is almost entirely automated. It employs 2,700 workers but they mostly seem to inhabit the office space. Only a few prowl the clean-rooms in their all-over body suits, and their role seems to be restricted to identifying and

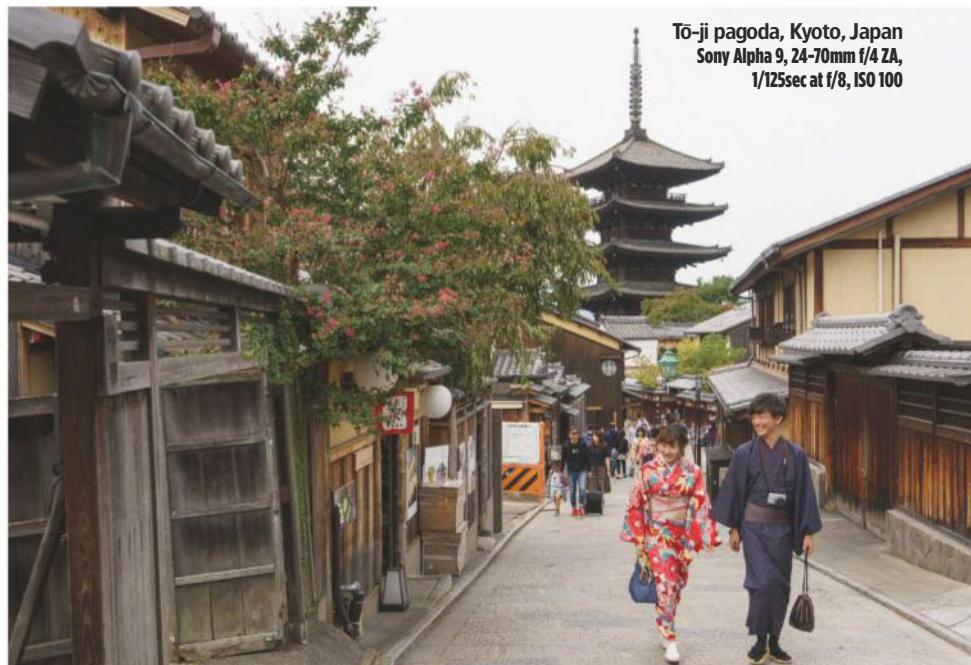
troubleshooting any problems that may occasionally arise. But mostly, the machines are left to get on with their tasks, fed by automated component carriers that move along tracks suspended from the ceilings.

Producing the sensors is a complex process, with steps that include photolithography, ion implantation, dry etching, physical and chemical vapour deposition, electrochemical deposition, cleaning and polishing, and oxidation and annealing. The whole process takes a surprisingly long time: up to six months from a silicon wafer arriving in the factory to finished sensors leaving, in the case of the complex stacked CMOS chips used in Sony's latest models including the Alpha 9. These sensors are therefore also the most expensive to produce, and it says a lot about Sony's technology-driven approach that it's been prepared to go to such lengths to gain a competitive advantage. It also goes some way to explaining why its latest-generation cameras are so much more expensive than the previous models.

Recovering from an earthquake

In the early hours of 16 April 2016, Kumamoto was hit by an earthquake of magnitude 7.3. It caused considerable structural damage to the Sony factory, destroying manufacturing equipment and halting all production. Pictures from the aftermath show shattered wafers of part-made sensors, equipment scattered across clean-rooms, and even roofs ripped open to reveal the sky above. As a result, camera production was set back considerably, not just Sony's but other manufacturers', too.

Despite the scale of the damage, Sony put in place a Herculean effort to get the factory working again. Engineers donned hard hats and cleaned up the mess themselves, carefully setting aside undamaged



Tō-ji pagoda, Kyoto, Japan
Sony Alpha 9, 24-70mm f/4 ZA,
1/125sec at f/8, ISO 100

Testbench



The Sony Alpha 9 assembly line in Chonburi, Thailand

Right: After assembly, each camera goes through a series of tests. This appears to be a lens-drive test

manufacturing equipment and materials. Fewer than five weeks after the earthquake, production restarted and the factory had fully recovered within three-and-a-half months. The physical scars of the experience are still visible today; numerous sections of the walls along the corridors are painted a slightly different colour where cracks have been patched up. Sony claims that if a similar quake were to happen in the future, it has put in place extra measures that mean it should be able to recover in just two months.

Chonburi - building the Alpha 9

While Sony's product design and sensor manufacturing are both done in Japan, its cameras and lenses are now mostly made in Thailand. Here, Sony says it can employ skilled labour at a much lower cost than in Japan, while still maintaining the high level of quality that's essential for professional-level kit.

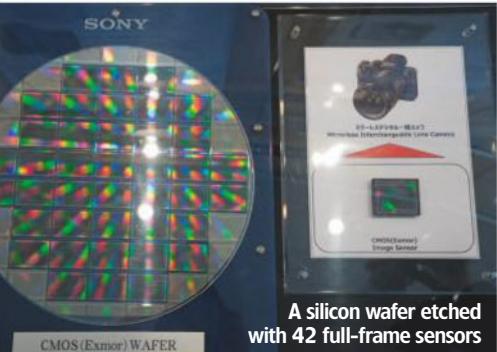
Sony Technology (Thailand) Co Ltd has two main factories, with cameras being made in its Chonburi plant that's located an hour's drive to the east of Bangkok. This location boasts excellent air and sea transport links, ideal for bringing in parts and materials, and



exporting finished products. Not only does the factory assemble both cameras and lenses, it also manufactures the complex, miniaturised circuit boards inside.

The factory started out life fairly unambitiously, making consumer-level products such as the 18–55mm zooms sold with DSLRs and some of the early NEX mirrorless cameras. But as its experience increased, Sony pushed it harder, getting it to build increasingly higher-end, more complex items. As a result, it's become a highly accomplished outfit, able to produce the most technically demanding items in Sony's range, including all of the top-end Alpha models and most of the G Master lenses. The latter are assembled in clean-rooms, with workers rigorously suited up in overalls, face masks and hair nets.

The environment for final assembly of the cameras is a little less stringent, and we were granted rare access to the Alpha 9 production line, and even allowed to take pictures. It's a surprisingly labour-intensive process, with long lines of young Thai men and women, each carrying out a single step that they've been trained and certified for. As parts move along the line, the camera gradually builds up to a finished whole, before undergoing a whole raft of checks and tests. Finally, it's boxed up with all of its accessories for shipping.



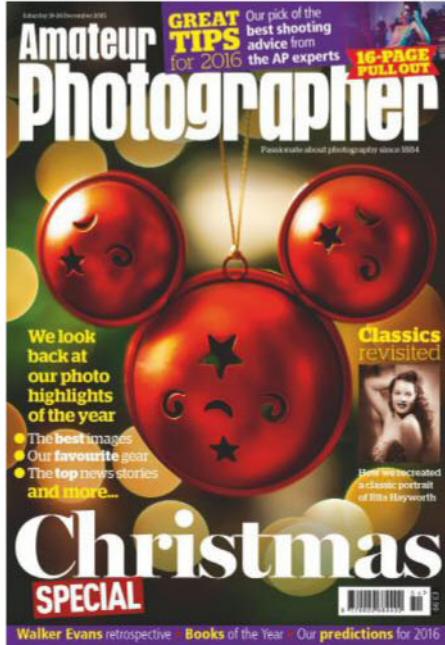
A silicon wafer etched with 42 full-frame sensors

Final thoughts

So at the end of all that, what have we learned? As we made the gruelling 12½-hour flight back to Heathrow from Bangkok, I certainly found myself impressed by Sony's technical ingenuity, the vision of its engineers and the commitment of its factories to attaining the highest possible standards. But on the other hand, it did little to allay the impression that the firm is driven almost entirely by the lure of stretching the limits of what is technically possible. During our week in Japan, relatively little was said about the art of photography, or of listening to feedback from real photographers and working to address their needs or desires.

Of course, when this approach pays off, Sony is capable of delivering truly groundbreaking products such as the Alpha 9, which allow photographers to capture images in ways that simply weren't possible before. But it also explains the firm's habit of cramming more and more features into its cameras, while not addressing any of their more evident design flaws. Sony is clearly going to be a considerable player in the camera market due to its sheer technical cleverness but if it could only come to trust photographers and genuinely learn from their feedback, it could surely become the single most dominant player for the foreseeable future.

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THE HOLIDAY season is almost upon us, which means it's time for Stir-up Sunday, sentimental TV adverts, and the *Amateur Photographer* Christmas cover competition. This year we have teamed up with Photocrowd, Billingham and PermaJet to offer you global exposure, and some great prizes to boot.

The prizes

The expert's winner (as judged by the AP team) will see their picture grace the cover of the AP Christmas Special (23–30 December). They will also receive a Billingham Hadley Pro bag

worth £200, courtesy of Billingham (www.billingham.co.uk) and an A3 print of the finished design courtesy of PermaJet (www.permajet.com). There will be a second winner (chosen by a public vote on Photocrowd (www.photocrowd.com)), who will receive £100 and an A3 print of their image. If the standard of entries is high enough a selection will appear inside a future issue of AP. For full terms and conditions visit www.amateurphotographer.co.uk.

The closing date for entries is midnight on 26 November 2017



HOW TO ENTER

The competition is open to everyone, whether amateur or professional, and you are free to interpret the theme in any way you choose. Naturally we are happy to see shots of baubles, trees and lights, but we also want pictures that show the creative potential of the season in general, so feel free to submit winter landscapes, indoor portraits, frosty flora and fauna etc. If you think you have something suitable on file, great, if not have a go at shooting something for the competition. To enter, upload your image(s) to the Photocrowd website via the following link: bit.ly/apxmascover

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Polaroid Originals OneStep 2

Geoff Harris sees if the revived Polaroid is an instant classic

● £109.99 ● uk.polaroidoriginals.com

THE OneStep 2 is the first instant camera to be launched by the revived Polaroid Originals brand, now owned by the Impossible Project. It's a purely analogue camera that takes both 600 and the new i-Type film. Despite its deliberate '70s styling, the OneStep 2 does have some modern touches, including a better lens, rechargeable battery with 60-day life (topped up by USB) and built-in flash. It's great to see the Polaroid name revived, but why does the OneStep 2 leave me rather cold?

First, it's ugly. Sure, you can convince yourself that this plastic carbuncle is all very hipster, but it juts out like a beer gut and you'll soon feel the weight. Sure, you can't miss the big red shutter button but the flash override button is fiddly, as is the film door latch.

Second, options are limited. Apart from the shutter button and flash override, you have a two-setting exposure-compensation slider (lighter or darker) and a self-timer. The manual recommends using flash, even indoors with decent light, but it's often overpowering. Hit the flash override, however, and your prints can underexpose. The fixed focus is obviously basic, but is effective enough from 60cm (about 2ft) to infinity – don't try and get in too close.

Third, it takes 15 minutes for the print to fully expose, and it must be kept as dark as possible while developing, which rather reduces the camera's appeal at a party or wedding. As for the new film, it looks nice enough, with muted colours and the occasional flaw adding to the retro charm, but the cost-per-print compares poorly with Fujifilm Instax. Fifteen pounds buys eight sheets of Polaroid Originals Color i-Type film, compared to 20 colour prints from Fujifilm. The new black & white film is impressive, however, especially for portraits.

Verdict

It's good to see Polaroid cameras revived, but the OneStep 2 feels like too little too late, especially at £110 plus film, and given the stiff competition from Fujifilm. While the iconic square prints will always look cool – and the new film formulations can generate interesting images – the OneStep 2's 'Fisher Price' design, bare-bones options, relatively high printing costs and slow printing times end up raining on the Polaroid revival parade.

At a glance

- 150 x 111 x 97mm, 440g (without film)
- Fixed 106mm lens
- Takes Polaroid Originals i-Type and 600 Type film

Two-position exposure slider

The exposure compensation slider (+/-) is about as basic as it gets.



Lens
The fixed lens has a useful 106mm focal length and focuses from about 60cm (2ft) to infinity.

Printer
It can take 15 minutes for the print to fully expose, so 'instant' is a relative term here.



Amateur Photographer Testbench
★★★

FILM STARS



The new i-Type film comes in colour, black & white, and special edition flavours. In case you were wondering, 'i' in the name stands for 'incredible'. According to the makers, 'The new film features the distinct dreamy aesthetic that Polaroid is famous for.' In practice, we got the best results with black & white.

Tech Support

Email your questions to: ap@timeinc.com, Twitter @AP_Magazine and #AskAP, or Facebook. Or write to Technical Support, Amateur Photographer Magazine, Time Inc. (UK), Pinehurst 2, Pinehurst Road, Farnborough Business Park, Farnborough, Hants GU14 7BF

What colour calibrator is best for my monitors?

Q I have two monitors with my PC – one expensive, big IPS and a cheap, smallish one. I don't have a colour-calibrated workflow but am thinking of biting the bullet and calibrating the monitor. I think it's actually pretty close, based on some prints from Loxley, but it'll ease my mind a bit.

I've read reviews of the various Spyders. There's some discussion that calibrating two monitors on the same PC with the basic Spyders won't result in them looking the same, but one of them with some extra software will align multiple monitors. That seems odd to me. Although I understand that two monitors can't display exactly the same gamut, wouldn't you expect them to be similar?

It's put me off a 'quick' purchase and allowed me to continue to procrastinate. Are some calibrators better than others, for either single or dual monitors?

EightBitTony (AP forum)

A You should absolutely calibrate the main IPS monitor, regardless. A Datacolor Spyder calibrator will do a good job, as will others. Whether you will be able to successfully calibrate the smaller, cheaper, monitor connected to the same PC at the same time is

uncertain. It really depends on the PC hardware. If your PC has two discrete hardware video controllers you may be OK.

If you are connecting the two monitors to one video card, it's likely calibration profiles will only be accessible for one monitor. If that is the case, you're best off using a visual calibration procedure on the second monitor. In other words, rather than using a custom profile to control the second display, like the primary one, you'd adjust the secondary display's physical controls. In Windows 10 you can use built-in visual calibration tools in the Display section of System settings.

Unwanted Exif data

Q I use an Olympus OM-D camera. How do I remove Olympus Corporation from the Exif file? When I upload to my club site, the file is named 'Olympus Corporation', so the title of my pic comes up as that, which it obviously is not. Is there a way to remove this info in-camera, so when I upload to my club site it does not appear? I use Adobe Lightroom 5. **Dave Hall**

A As you've discovered, Olympus is rather unusual since its cameras, by default, insert 'Olympus digital camera' in the Caption field of



The EOS 6D Mark II has good dynamic range at medium and high ISOs

Dynamic range: what's all the fuss about?

Q Reviews and online comments on the new Canon EOS 6D Mark II have, in the main, slated it for many reasons but mainly its lack of progress on the dynamic range compared with other brands. I appreciate I am no expert but when I have visited photography exhibitions I cannot tell if a photo was taken on a Canon or a Nikon, or whatever. Is there really such a difference? **Bazarchie (AP forum)**

A It's all relative. There are no really bad system cameras any more. Having bags of dynamic range means you can shoot with more confidence in conditions where the light is harsh. It also protects you from inaccurate exposure. The Canon EOS 6D Mark II exhibits good dynamic range at medium and high ISO sensitivities. At low ISOs it's around an EV (exposure value) behind its principal rival, the Nikon D750. There are ways of boosting dynamic range, such as merging exposures, for example. But it's inconvenient and more work, although not a catastrophe. If your work demands very wide dynamic range at low ISOs, you probably wouldn't buy an EOS 6D Mark II, although an experienced photographer would be able to cope with it.

Use Lightroom to lose unwanted Exif data, including camera maker's credit

the camera image file Exif metadata. In fact, the same tag is also a default in Olympus camera IPTC and XMP metadata fields. I'm assuming it's 'Olympus digital camera' you are seeing rather than 'Olympus imaging corp', which you will find in the Make field. When exporting images from Lightroom you can select, from a list of options, which fields to retain in the exported images. However, to get rid of the caption you will also lose your camera

settings data, which you might want to retain. If you have Adobe Bridge, you can clear the field in a batch selection of images. Looking at it from the other way around, you could use Lightroom's Import presets to clear the offending field. For just the occasional image, you can right-click a JPEG file, and examine and edit the metadata via Properties > Details.

Q&A compiled by Ian Burley

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Sony Alpha 9
20fps powerhouse CSC takes on Nikon D5 & Canon EOS-1D X Mk II

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Tony Kemplen on the ...

Minox EC

Make like James Bond with this late Cold War miniature camera, readily available on eBay

When you hear the name Minox, you probably think of the shady world of Cold War spying, or the glamorous escapades of James Bond. Indeed, these superbly made miniature cameras were extensively used by agents on both sides of the Iron Curtain. The first Minox cameras were made in Riga, Latvia in the 1930s, but after the Second World War the factory reopened in West Germany.

Late arrival at the ball

I've got a Minox B, dating from the 1960s. It's a little marvel of mechanical engineering. It has a full range of shutter speeds, apertures and a built-in exposure meter. The Minox EC is a different kettle of fish altogether.

Launched in 1981 it was very much a late arrival at the Cold War ball. Gone are all the manual features of its predecessors; instead, we are presented with a fully automatic camera with nothing, not even focusing, for the user to set.

Other than its size and shape, it bears little resemblance to the company's earlier precision cameras, and is of little interest to a true Minox enthusiast. The EC was on the market for 16 years,

with more than 150,000 sold, and as a result is pretty easy to come by. A quick look on eBay shows 'buy it now' prices from around £35, with sold listings sometimes being lower still. To put this in context, the common late mechanical models, such as the Minox B, tend to fetch £120.

The specifications of the EC are similar to many consumer compacts of the era. The exposure system is fully automatic and can cope with a wide range of lighting conditions. The 15mm lens has a fixed aperture of f/5.6 and is focus-free.

As far as I'm aware, no camera case was made for the Minox EC. There really wasn't any need for one since when the camera is closed, all the controls, and the lens, are completely covered and protected.

Living dangerously

Given the extinction of several lesser-used film formats in recent years, I was surprised to find that Minox film is still available to buy. I decided to go down the cheaper, and rather fiddly, route of cutting 35mm film down to 9.2mm and reloading the cartridges myself.

The advantage of this is that you have a whole range of emulsions to choose from. The very real



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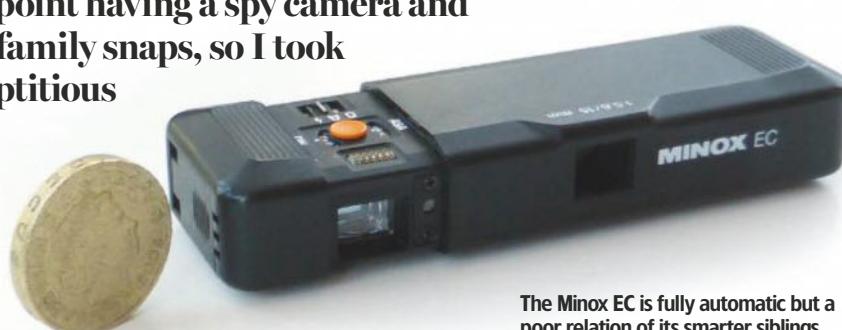
What's a spy camera for, if not to take sneaky shots of a pickled shark?

downside is that tinkering with razor blades in the dark is a risky business and although the cuts I sustained have since healed, my first self-loaded film cartridges were streaked with blood.

There's not much point in having a spy camera and using it for family snapshots, of course, so although I generally follow the rules, I thought I'd live a little dangerously by taking some surreptitious photographs in places where cameras are most certainly not allowed.

As a law-abiding conformist, for me this was a transgression akin to Theresa May running through a cornfield, although in her case all she had to fear was the farmer's wrath. In contrast, I could have been swallowed by Damien Hirst's pickled shark!

'There's no point having a spy camera and using it for family snaps, so I took some surreptitious photos...'



The Minox EC is fully automatic but a poor relation of its smarter siblings

Tony Kemplen's love of photography began as a teenager and, ever since, he has been collecting cameras with a view to testing as many as he can. You can follow his progress on his 52 Cameras blog at 52cameras.blogspot.co.uk. More photos from the Minox EC at www.flickr.com/photos/tony_kemplen/sets/72157628731255313/

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17-85mm F3.5-5.6 IS USM	As Seen £89
18-55mm F3.5-5.6 IS STM	Mint- / Mint £89
20mm F2.8 USM	E+ £249
24mm F1.4 L USM MKII	E++ / Mint- £999 - £1,049
24mm F2.8 EF	E+ £179
24mm F2.8 STM	Mint- £99 - £109
24mm F3.5 L TSE MKII	Mint- £1,199
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70-200mm F4 L IS USM	E++ £639
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Tamron 28-75mm F2.8 XR Di AF

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Tamron 70-300mm F4-5.6 Di VC USD

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Tokina 12-24mm F4 ATX PRO SD

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Tokina 16-28mm F2.8 ATX FX

E++ £249

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Zeiss 21mm F2.8 ZE

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Sigma 1.4x TC-1401 Converter

Mint £149

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2x EF Extender

As Seen / E+ £79 - £129

2x EF II Extender

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Metz 15 MS-1 Flash

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Metz 50AF1 Digital

E++ £69

Metz 58 AF1 Digital

E++ £139

Metz 58 AF1

E++ £249

Nissin Di622 Flash

E+ / E++ £49 - £59

Nissin Di866 Flash

E+ / E++ £89 - £99

Sigma EF-610 DG ST Flash

Mint- £49

Sigma EF500 DG ST Flash - Canon EOS

E++ £39

Sigma EF500 DG ST Flash - Nikon

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Sigma EF500 DG ST Flash - Pentax

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Sigma EF500 DG ST Flash - Sony

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80mm F1.4 R 3cam	E++ / Mint- £1,699 - £1,799
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Sigma 150-600mm F5-6.3 DG OS HSM Sport	E+ £1,089
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Tamron 15-30mm SP F2.8 Di VC	Mint- £649
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18mm F2.8 AFD	E++ £499	Zeiss 100mm F2 ZF2 Macro	Mint- £1,049
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24mm F1.4 G AFS ED	Mint- £989	Sigma 2x TC-2001 Converter	Mint- £719
24mm F2.8 AFD	As Seen / E+ £149 - £189	Teleplus 1.4x Pro300 Converter	E++ £779
24-70mm F3.5-5.6 IX	E+ £29	TC-14E Converter	E+ £1219
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28mm F2.8 AFD	E+ £149	TC-20EI Converter	E+ £1519
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GH5 Body £1699

GH5 + 12-60mm £1899

f3.5-5.6

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f2.8-4.0



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30.4 megapixels, 7.0 fps, Full Frame CMOS sensor



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£50 Cashback*

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- 5.0 fps
- 1080p movie mode

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7D Mark II Body £1349



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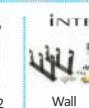
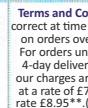
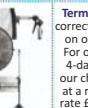
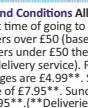
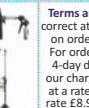
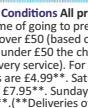
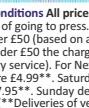
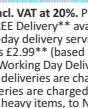
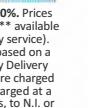
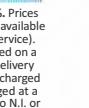
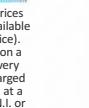
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D850

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24mm f/2.8 STM	£139.00	TS-E 135mm f/4L Macro	NEW £2,499.00
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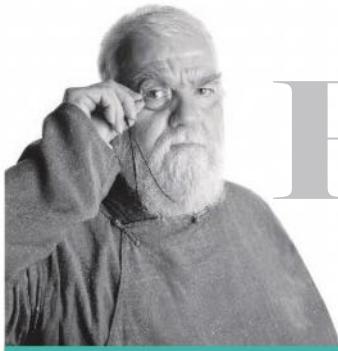
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Final Analysis

Roger Hicks considers...

'Dahlia, Victoria Ann', 2011, by Kenji Toma

In *Lords and Ladies*, by the late Sir Terry Pratchett, Granny Weatherwax says of a fake crown in a theatrical performance somewhat resembling the Scottish play, 'Things that try to look like things often do look more like things than things. Well-known fact.' A representation of a dahlia can, stripped of all context and presented like this, look more like a dahlia than a dahlia.

According to Kehrer Verlag, the publishers of *The Most Beautiful Flowers* (ISBN 978-3-86828-789-9), Kenji Toma's pictures are an 'homage to the botanical illustrations in *Choix des plus belles fleurs* by Pierre-Joseph Redouté, one of the most well-regarded flower encyclopedias of the 19th century.' Well, all right, well done Pierre-Joseph; but I find it even more fascinating how Toma recreates delicate watercolour illustrations using photography.

The answer, as is almost invariably the case in photography, is that there are probably several routes to the same end. But what if you are sufficiently inspired (as I am) to try to repeat the trick? Here are a few ideas, but they may not all work and you'll need a lot of practice before you are as good as Toma.

Background, exposure, contrast

First, there is the off-white background. Not only does this remind us of the ageing paper of a 19th-century tome, it also serves as a useful foil to the brilliant white of the petals. Second, exposure is generous – there are no murky, underexposed areas. Third, there is quite high contrast and saturation. The whites of the petals on the left (though not on the right) are 'blown' to featureless highlights. It doesn't matter, though, because they are edged by that spectacular crimson-pink, and in some cases with shadow as well. Fourth, there's a lot of grainy texture. This suggests a well-considered approach to resolution and sharpening.

Personally, I'd try high dynamic range (HDR), compressing the mid-tones in order to see into the shadows as well as giving reasonable highlight definition. Of course, it is possible (and even commonplace) to overdo HDR to the point where the picture appears unnatural. But



© KENJI TOMA

'The off-white background serves as a useful foil to the brilliant white of the petals'

what if the picture is supposed to appear unnatural? What is 'unnatural', after all? Hyperrealism is a well-known technique in painting, especially in airbrush painting. We're straight back to things

that look like things often looking more like things than things.

In other words, 'realism' in photography is a flexible concept. In reportage, it might be wobbly colours (or black & white) and big grain. In portraiture, it might be anything from 1940s Hollywood soft focus and retouching to the Taylor Wessing Depressed Teenager of the Year Award. Until we ask what 'realism' means, we cannot attempt to achieve it.

Roger Hicks has been writing about photography since 1981 and has published more than three dozen books on the subject, many in partnership with his wife Frances Schultz (visit his new website at www.rogerandfrances.eu). Every week in this column Roger deconstructs a classic or contemporary photograph. **Next week he considers an image by Robert Ramser**



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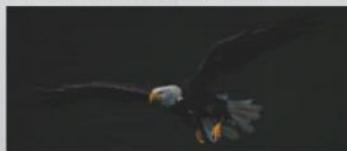
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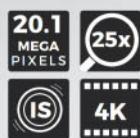
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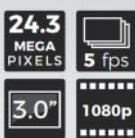


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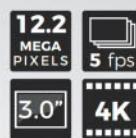


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